A GENTLEMAN FROM MISSISSIPPI

THE SENATOR AND "BUD" HAINES.

A GENTLEMAN FROM MISSISSIPPI

A NOVEL

Founded on the popular play of the same title

PRODUCED UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF

WM. A. BRADY

AND

JOS. R. GRISMER

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INTRODUCTION

Here is a story of an epoch-making battle of right against wrong, of honesty against corruption, of simplicity and sincerity against deceit, bribery and intrigue. It is the story of to-day in this country. It vitally concerns every man, woman and child in the United States, so far-reaching is its influence.

The warfare is now going on—the warfare of honest men against corrupt political machines.

The story tells the "inside" of the political maneuvers in Washington and of the workings of bosses there and elsewhere—how they shape men and women to their ends, how their cunning intrigues extend into the very social life of the nation's capital. You will find inspiration in the career of the honest old Southern planter elected to the United States Senate and the young newspaper reporter who becomes his private secretary and political pilot. Your heart will beat in sympathy with the love of the secretary and the Senator's youngest daughter.

You will read of the lobbyists and find that not all of them are men. You will see how avarice causes a daughter to conspire against her father. You will hear the note of a gripping national tragedy in the words of Peabody, the "boss of the Senate." But cause for laughter as well will not be found lacking in this truly many-sided narrative.

A Gentleman from Mississippi

CHAPTER I

PRACTICAL POLITICS

That bids him flout the law he makes;
That bids him make the law he flouts.
—*Kipling.*

In buoyant spirit the Hon. Charles Norton rode up the bridle path leading through the Langdon plantation to the old antebellum homestead which, on a shaded knoll, overlooked the winding waters of the Pearl River. No finer prospect was to be had in all Mississippi than greeted the eye from the wide southwest porch, where on warm evenings the Langdons and their frequent guests gathered to dine or to watch the golden splendor of the dying sun.

The Langdon family had long been a power in the South. Its sons fought under Andrew Jackson at New Orleans, under Zachary Taylor in the war with Mexico, and in the Civil War men of that name left their blood on the fields of Antietam, Shiloh, the Wilderness and Gettysburg. But this family of fighting men, of unselfish patriots, had also marked influence in the ways of peace, as real patriots should. Generations of Langdons had taken deep-

est pride in developing the hundreds of acres of cotton land, whose thousands of four-foot rows planted each April spread open the silvery lined bolls in July and August, and the ripened cotton fiber, pure white beneath the sun, gave from a distance the picture of an expanse of driven snow.

The Hon. Charles Norton had reason for feeling well pleased with the world as he fastened his bay Virginia hunter to a convenient post and strode up the steps of the mansion, which was a characteristic survivor of the "old South," the South of gilded romance and of gripping tragedy. Now in this second year of his first term as Congressman and a promising member of the younger set of Southern lawyers, he had just taken active part in securing the election of Colonel William H. Langdon, present head of the family, to the United States Senate, though the ultimate action of the Legislature had been really brought about by a lifelong friend of Colonel Langdon, the senior Senator from the State, James Stevens, who had not hesitated to flatter Norton and use him as a cat's-paw. This use the Hon. Charles Norton seemed to consider an honor of large proportions. Not every first-term Congressman can hope for intimacy with a Senator. Norton believed that his work for Langdon would win him the family's gratitude and thus further his ambition to marry Carolina, the planter's oldest daughter, whose beauty made her the recipient of many attentions.

A complacent gleam shone in Norton's eyes as they swept over the fertile acres of the plantation. He thought of the material interest he might one day have in them if his suit for the hand of Carolina progressed favorably. Suddenly his reverie was interrupted by the voice of young Randolph Langdon,

a spirited lad in his early twenties, who had just been made plantation manager by his father.

"Well, how is the honorable to-day?" said Randolph, approaching from the doorway. "I didn't think a Congressman could be spared from Washington but rarely, especially when the papers say the country needs such a lot of saving."

"Oh, this 'saving the country' talk goes all right in the story books," replied Norton, who exercised considerable influence over the youth through a long acquaintanceship and by frequently taking him into his confidence, "but this country can take pretty good care of itself. In Congress we representatives put the job of saving it over on the Senate, and the Senate hands back the job to us. So what's everybody's business isn't anybody's; a fine scheme so long as we have a President who keeps his hands off and doesn't——"

"But how about the speeches and the bills?" broke in Randolph. "I thought——"

"Yes, yes; to be sure," the Congressman quickly added. "Nearly all of us introduce these so-called reform bills. When they're printed at government expense we send copies, carried free by the Post-office Department, to our constituents, and when we allow the bills to die in some committee we can always blame the committee. But if there's a big fight by our constituents over the bill we let it pass the House, but arrange to kill it in the Senate. Then we do the same thing for the Senators. Like in every other business, my boy," continued Norton as he led the way into the house, "it's a case of 'you tickle me and I'll tickle you' in politics. And don't let any one fool you about the speeches either. They are pretty things to mail to the voters, but all the wise boys in Washington know they aren't

meant seriously. It's all play acting, and there are better actors in the Senate than Henry Irving or Edwin Booth ever were."

"I don't think my father looks at things in the way you do, Charlie."

"No? Well, maybe he doesn't now, but he will later on when he takes his seat in the Senate. If he isn't wise enough to play around with the rest of the Senators he won't get any bills passed, especially any bill carrying an appropriation or of any other particular importance."

"What!" ejaculated the planter's son. "Do you mean to say that if father won't do what the other Senators want him to do they will combine against him and destroy his usefulness, make him powerless—a failure?"

The Congressman smiled patronizingly on the youth. "Why, of course they will. That's politics, practical politics, the only kind that's known in Washington. You see——"

"But the leaders of the great parties!" cried the young plantation manager, in amazement. "Why don't they prevent this?"

"Because they invented the system and because political party differences don't amount to a whole lot much of the time in Washington. The politicians do most of their criticizing of the other party away from Washington, where the voters can hear them. But when circumstances sometimes force a man to rise to assail the other side in Congress he afterward apologizes in secret for his words. Or, sometimes he apologizes beforehand, saying: 'I've got to hand out some hot shot to you fellows just to please a crowd of sovereign voters from my district who have come up to Washington to see me perform. So, of course, I've got to make a showing,

Don't mind what I say. You know I don't mean it, but the old fogies will go back home and tell their neighbors what a rip-snortin' reformer I be.'"

"Is that the way you represent your district; Norton?" asked Planter Langdon, who at this juncture entered the room.

"No, no, Mr. Langdon—I should say Senator now, I suppose. I was merely telling Randolph how some legislators conduct themselves."

The Senator-elect paused momentarily, gazing at the Congressman, who, dark-visaged, tall, black-haired, broad-shouldered and athletic, was visibly uneasy at having his conversation with Randolph overheard by the father.

"No doubt it won't be all plain sailing in Washington for an old-fashioned man like me, but I believe in the American people and the men they send to Congress," slowly spoke the planter. "There's Senator Stevens, for instance. He has always stood for the rights of the people. I've read all his speeches. Just why he brought about my election it is hard to tell, for I've been a planter all my life, except when I fought under Beauregard. I feel that he did it out of friendship, and I simply can't say how much I appreciate the honor. I am indebted to you, too, Congressman."

Tactfully disclaiming any credit for his work, only Norton's congressional training in repression enabled him to refrain from smiling at Langdon's innocence, his belief in Stevens' sincerity and his wonder over his election. Stevens, the keen, cold and resourceful, who forced his officeholders to yield him parts of their government salaries; Stevens, who marketed to railway companies his influence with the Department of Justice; Stevens, who was a Republican in the committee room in Wash-

ington and a Democrat on the platform in Mississippi; Stevens, who had consummated the deal with Martin Sanders, boss of seven counties, to elect Langdon because of the planter's trustfulness and simplicity of character, which should make him easy to influence and to handle in the all-important matter of the gulf naval base project!

The entry of Carolina Langdon and her younger sister, Hope Georgia, gave Norton a welcome opportunity to shift the trend of conversation.

"You ladies will have a gay time in Washington," he began, after directing a particularly enthusiastic greeting to Carolina. "You will be in great demand at all the big affairs, and I don't think you will ever want to come back to old Mississippi, forty miles from a railroad, with few chances to wear your New York gowns."

Carolina spoke quickly, her face flushing at the thought of the new vista of life now opening. "Yes, I have always longed to be a part of the real life of this world; the life of constant action—meeting new people every day, and prominent people. Balls, receptions, teas, theater parties, afternoon drives, plenty of money and plenty of gayety are what I want. I'm not a bit like Hope Georgia, who thinks these ideas are extravagant because she has not seen real life yet——"

"Carolina, you must not think me 'only your little sister' now. I have seen life. Haven't I spent a week in Jackson?"

"That's enough proof. You know all about life, I'm sure, Miss Hope Georgia," smilingly remarked Norton.

Later, rising to join Planter Langdon on the veranda, where he had gone to smoke, the Congressman gazed intently at Carolina. "You will proba-

bly forget your old friends when you enter the dizzy social race in Washington."

"No, Charlie, I couldn't forget you, anyhow. You will be there, too. I shall depend on you a great deal to take me about, unless you are too busy making speeches and fighting your opponents."

Again it was Norton's turn to be inwardly amused at the political ignorance of the Langdon family. Speeches? The first-term Congressman doesn't make speeches in Washington, because no one cares what he thinks—except the lobbyists, whose business it is to provide new members with a complete set of thoughts. Neither does he have opponents—he is not considered important enough by the veterans to be opposed.

Skilfully approaching the subject which next to Carolina Langdon had been uppermost in his mind during his visit, Norton asked the Senator-elect on joining him if he did not believe that the entire South would benefit if the plan to establish a naval base on the gulf was successfully carried through.

"Most certainly I do, and, as I said during the senatorial fight, the whole country as well will be the gainer," responded Langdon.

"Don't you think the people who want Altacoola chosen as the site have the best arguments?" was the visitor's next question, the reply to which he anxiously awaited.

"Yes, I do, from what I've already heard; but I haven't heard very much of what the folks who advocate other sites have to say. So, until I've heard all sides and made my own examination, I couldn't give any one my final answer, but Altacoola seems to have the necessary qualifications."

"Senator Stevens is in favor of Altacoola," eagerly suggested Norton.

"Yes, and that's a pretty good argument in its favor," responded Langdon.

Norton now excused himself, pleading an appointment with a client at a neighboring village. Waving farewell to Carolina and Hope Georgia, who stood at a window, he rode away. "The old man is sure to be all right," he muttered. "He leans toward Altacoola and believes in Stevens. He'll lean some more until he falls over—into the trap. There's a fortune in sight—within reach. Langdon has faith in his friends. He won't suspect a thing."

Still another thought occurred to the Hon. Charles Norton. "Stevens elected Langdon out of friendship," he chuckled, gleefully. "That will be well worth telling in Washington."

CHAPTER II

THE WARS OF PEACE

"Big Bill" Langdon was the term by which the new Senator from Mississippi had been affectionately known to his intimates for years. He carried his 230 pounds with ease, bespeaking great muscular power in spite of his gray hairs. His rugged courage, unswerving honesty and ready belief in his friends won him a loyal following, some of whom frequently repeated what was known as "Bill Langdon's Golden Rule":

"There never was a man yet who didn't have some good in him, but most folks don't know this because their own virtues pop up and blind 'em when they look at somebody else."

At the reunions of his old war comrades Langdon was always depended on to describe once again how the Third Mississippi charged at Crawfordsville and defeated the Eighth Illinois. But the stirring events of the past had served to increase the planter's fondness for his home life and his children, whose mother had died years before. At times he regretted that his unexpected political duties would take him away from the old plantation even though the enthusiastic approval of Carolina and Hope Georgia proved considerable compensation.

Although not sworn in as Senator, Colonel Langdon's political duties were already pressing. A few

days after Congressman Norton's visit he sat in his library conferring with several prominent citizens of his county regarding a plan to ask Congress to appropriate money to dredge a portion of the channel of the Pearl River, which would greatly aid a large section of the State.

During the deliberations the name of Martin Sanders was announced by Jackson, the Colonel's gravely decorous negro bodyguard, who boasted that he "wuz brung up by Cunel Marse Langdon, suh, a fightin' Mississippi cunel, suh, sence long befo' de wah and way befo' dat, suh."

"Show Mr. Sanders right in," commanded Colonel Langdon.

"Good-day, Senator," spoke Sanders, the boss of seven counties, as he entered. Glancing around the room, he continued, bending toward the Colonel and muffling his now whispering voice with his hand: "I want to speak to you alone. I'm here on politics."

"That's all right; but these gentlemen here are my friends and constituents," was the reply in no uncertain voice. "When I talk politics they have a perfect right to hear what I, as their Senator, say. Out with it, Mr. Sanders."

As Sanders was introduced to the members of the conference he grew red in the face and stared at Langdon, amazed. At last he had discovered something new in politics. "Say," he finally blurted out, "when I talk business I——"

"Are you in politics as a business?" quickly spoke Colonel Langdon.

"Why—I—er—no, of course not," the visitor stammered. "I am in politics for my party's sake, just like everybody else," and Sanders grinned suggestively at his questioner.

"Have you anything further to say?" asked Lang-

don, in a tone hinting that he would like to be rid of his caller.

"Well, since you are so very new in this game, Senator, I'll talk right out in meetin', as they call it. I came to ask about an appointment an' to tip you off on a couple o' propositions. I want Jim Hagley taken care of—you've heard of Jim—was clerk o' Fenimore County. A $2,000 a year job'll do for him; $500 o' that he gives to the organization."

"You're the organization, aren't you?" queried Langdon.

"Why, yes. Are you just gettin' wise?" cried Sanders. "Haven't I got fellers, voters, VOTERS, VOTERS, d—n it, hangin' on to me that needs to be taken care of! An' so I make the fellers that work help those that don't. Why, Langdon, what'n h—l are you kickin' an' questionin' about? Didn't you get my twelve votes in the Legislature? Did you have a chance for Senator without 'em? Answer me that, will you? Why, with 'em you only had two more than needed to elect, an' the opposition crowd was solid for Wilson," cried the angry boss, pounding the long table before which Langdon sat.

"I'll answer you almighty quick," retorted the now thoroughly aroused Senator-elect, rising and shaking his clenched fist at Sanders. "Those twelve votes you say were yours—yours?"

"Yes, mine. Them noble legislators that cast 'em was an' is mine, mine. I tell you, jest like I had 'em in my pocket, an' that's where I mostly carry 'em, so as they won't go strayin' aroun' careless like."

"You didn't have to vote those men for me. I told you at the Capitol that I would not make you

or anybody else any promises. You voted them for me of your own accord. That's my answer."

At this point the gentlemen of the county present when Sanders entered and who had no desire to witness further the unpleasant episode, rose to leave, in spite of the urgent request of Colonel Langdon that they remain. The only one reluctant to go was Deacon Amos Smallwood, who, coming to the plantation to seek employment for his son, had not been denied of his desire to join the assemblage of his neighbors.

Last to move toward the door, he stopped in front of Sanders, stretched his five feet three inches of stature on tiptoe, and shook a withered fist in the boss' firmly set, determined face.

"Infamous!" shrieked the deacon. "You're a monster! You're unrighteous! You should have belonged to the political machine of Cataline or Pontius Pilate!"

"Never heard tell o' them," muttered Sanders, deeply puzzled. "Guess they was never in Mississippi in my time."

His accompanying gesture of perplexity caused the deacon to hasten his exit. Tripping over the leg of a chair, he fell headlong into the arms of the watchful Jackson, who received the deacon's blessing for "uplifting the righteous in the hour of their fall."

Relieved at the departure of the witnesses, Sanders showed increased aggressiveness. "To be sure, Senator, you were careful not to personally promise me anything for my support at the election, as you say," the leader sneered; "but you had Jim Stevens to make promises for you, which was smooth, absolute an' artistic smooth——"

"Stop, sir!" Langdon furiously shouted. "You

forget, sir, that your insinuation is an insult to a man elected Senator from Mississippi, an insult to my State and to my friend Senator Stevens, who I know would make you no promises for me, for he had not my authority."

"Certainly you're a Senator, but what's a Senator, anyhow? I'll tell you, Mr. Colonel Langdon, a Senator is a man who holds out for his own pocket as much as us fellows that make him will stand for. When we don't get our rightful share, he's through."

With a sudden start, as though to spring at Sanders' throat, Langdon, with compressed lips and eyes blazing, grasped the edge of the table with a grip that threatened to rend the polished boards. With intensest effort he slowly regained control of himself. His fury had actually weakened him. His knees shook, and he sank weakly into a chair. When he finally spoke his voice was strained and laborious. "Sanders, you and I, sir, must never meet again, because I might not succeed in keeping my hands off you. What would my old comrades of the Third Mississippi say if they saw me sitting here and you there with a whole body, sir, after what you have said? They would not believe their eyes, thank God, sir. They would all go over to Stuart City and buy new glasses, sir." A suspicious moisture appeared on the Colonel's cheeks which he could not dry too quickly to escape Sanders' observation.

"But I had to let you stay, sir, because you, the sole accuser, are the only one who can tell me what I must know."

"What do you want to know?" asked Sanders, who had realized his great mistake in losing his temper, in talking as openly and as violently as he had and in dragging the name of Senator Stevens

into the controversy. He must try to keep Stevens from hearing of this day's blunder, for Jim Stevens knew as well as he, didn't he, that the man who loses his temper, like the man who talks too much, is of no use in politics.

"I want to know how you formed your opinion of political matters—of Senators. Is it possible, sir, that you have actual knowledge of actual happenings that give you the right to talk as you have? I want to know if I must feel shame, feel disgrace, sir, to be a Senator from Mississippi; that State, sir, that the Almighty himself, sir, would choose to live in if he came to earth."

"There, there, Senator, don't take too seriously what I have said," Sanders replied in reassuring tone, having outlined his course of action. "I lost my head because you wouldn't promise me something I needed—that appointment for Hagley. What I said about Senators an' such was all wild words—nothin' in 'em. Why, how could there be, Senator?" This query was a happy afterthought which Sanders craftily suggested in a designedly artless manner.

"Just what I thought and know!" exclaimed Langdon, sharply. "It couldn't be; it isn't possible. Now you go, sir, and let it be your greatest disgrace that you are not fit to enter any gentleman's house."

"Oh, don't rub it in too hard, Senator. You may need my help some day, but you'll have to deliver the goods beforehand."

"I said, 'Go!'"

"I'm goin', but here's a tip. Don't blame me for fightin' you. I've got to fight to live. I'm a human bein', an' humans are pretty much the same all over

the world; all except you—you're only half natural. The rest of you is reformer."

After Sanders' departure the Colonel sat at his table, his head resting in his hand, the events of the day crowding his brain bewilderingly.

"The battles of peace are worse than any Beauregard ever led me into," he murmured. "Fighting to conquer oneself is harder than turning the left flank of the Eighth Illinois in an enfilading fire."

But the new Senator from Mississippi did not know that for him the wars of peace had only just begun, that perhaps his own flesh and blood and that of the wife and mother who had gone before would turn traitor to his colors in the very thickest of the fray.

CHAPTER III

HOW TO PLEASE A SENATOR

THE International Hotel in Washington was all hustle and bustle. Was it not preparing for its first Senator since 1885? No less a personage than the Hon. William H. Langdon of Mississippi, said to be a warm personal friend of Senator Stevens, one of the leading members of his party at the capital, had engaged a suit of rooms for himself and two daughters.

"Ain't it the limit?" remarked the chief clerk to Bud Haines, correspondent of the New York *Star*. "The Senator wrote us that he was coming here because his old friend, the late Senator Moseley, said back in '75 that this was the best hotel in Washington and where all the prominent men ought to stay."

Haines, the ablest political reporter in Washington, had come to the International to interview the new Senator, to describe for his paper what kind of a citizen Langdon was. He glanced around at the dingy woodwork, the worn cushions, the nicked and uneven tiles of the hotel lobby, and smiled at the clerk. "Well, if this is the new Senator's idea of princely luxury he will fit right into the senatorial atmosphere." Both laughed derisively. "By the way," added Haines, "I suppose you'll raise your rates now that you've got a Senator here."

The clerk brought his fist down on the register with a thud.

"We could have them every day if we wanted them. This fellow, though, we'll have all winter, I guess. His son's here now. Been breaking all records for drinking. Congressman Norton of Mississippi has been down here with him a few times. There young Langdon is now."

Haines turned quickly, just in time to bump into a tall, slender young man, who was walking unevenly in the direction of the café.

"Well, can't you see what you're doing?" muttered the tall young man thickly.

Haines smiled. The chap who has played halfback four years on his college eleven and held the boxing championship in his class is apt to be good-natured. He does not have to take offense easily. Besides, Randolph Langdon was plainly under the influence of whisky. So Haines smiled pleasantly at the taller young man.

"Beg your pardon—my fault," Haines said.

"Well, don't let it occur again," mumbled Langdon, as he strolled with uneven dignity toward the door. Bud Haines laughed.

"I guess young Langdon is going to be one of the boys, isn't he?"

"He's already one of them when it comes to a question of fluid capacity," laughed some one behind him, and Bud whirled to meet the gaze of his friend, Dick Cullen, representative of one of the big Chicago dailies.

"You down here to see Langdon, too?" commented Bud.

Cullen nodded. "Queer roost where this Senator is to hang out, isn't it?"

"He can't be a rich one, then," suggested Haines.

Cullen chuckled.

"Perhaps he's an honest one."

"I hadn't thought of that. You always were original, Dickie," commented Haines, dryly. "By the way, what do you know about him?"

"Nothing, except that the *Evening Call* printed a picture of his eldest daughter—says she's the queen daughter of the South, a famous beauty, rich planter for a father, mother left her a fortune——"

"She'll cut quite a social caper with this hotel's name on her cards, won't she?" broke in Haines, as he led Cullen to a seat to await the expected legislator, whose train was late.

"I don't know very much about him myself," said Haines. "All I've been able to discover is that Stevens said the word which elected him, and that looks bad. Great glory! When I think what a Senator of the right sort has a chance to do here in Washington—a nonpartisan, straight-out-from-the-shoulder man!" He paused to shake his head in disgust. "You know these fellows here in the Senate don't even see their chance. Why, if you and I didn't do any more to hold our jobs than they do, we'd be fired by wire the first day. They know just the old political game, that's all."

"Its a great game, though, Bud," sighed Cullen, longingly, for, like many newspaper men, he had the secret feeling that he was cut out to be a great politician.

"Sure, it's a great game, as a game," agreed Haines. "So is bridge, and stud poker, and three-card monte, and flim-flam generally. Take this new man Langdon, for instance. Chosen by Stevens, he'll probably be perfectly obedient, perfectly easy going, perfectly blind and—perfectly useless.

What's wanted now is to get the work done, not play the game."

Thoroughly a cynic through his years of experience as a newspaper man, which had shown the inside workings of many important phases of the seemingly conventional life of this complex world, Cullen pretended unbounded enthusiasm.

"Hear! hear!" he shouted. "All you earnest citizens come vote for Reformer Haines. I'm for you, Bud. What do I get in your cabinet? I've joined the reformers, too, and, like all of them, me for P-U-R-I-T-Y as long as she gives me a meal ticket."

But not even Cullen could make Haines consider his views on the necessity of political regeneration to be ridiculous. His optimism could not be snuffed out, for he was a genuine believer that the natural tendency of humankind was to do right. Wrong he believed to be the outcome of unnatural causes. This quality, combined with his practical knowledge of the world and his courage, made him a formidable man, one who would one day accomplish big things—if he got the chance.

"You know you can't shut me up, Dick," was his response to Cullen's oratorical flight. "I'm going to have my say. I don't see why a Senator shouldn't be honest. All I want them to do is to play a new game. Let 'em at least seem to be honest, attend to their business, forget politics. The country sends them here to work, and if they do the work the people really don't care a hang what party they belong to."

"Come out of it, Bud. Your brain is wabbly," yawned Cullen, wearily. "I'll buy a drink if you'll quiet down. Let's be comfortable till this fellow Langdon appears." He caught his friend by the

arm and in spite of protest dragged him off to the café just as young Langdon and Congressman Norton came down through the lobby.

Though but few years older than Randolph Langdon, Charles Norton had long exercised strong influence over him because of his wider experience in the world's affairs. Like his father, young Langdon had stayed close to the plantation most of his life, particularly after leaving school, devoting his attention to studying the business of conducting the family's big estate. Norton brought him the atmosphere of the big outside world he yearned to see even as did his sister Carolina, and he imitated Norton's manners, his dress and mode of speech. The Congressman's habit of confiding in Randolph, a subtle compliment, was deeply appreciated by the lad, who unconsciously became a continual advertiser of Norton's many virtues to Carolina and to his father, all of which the Congressman knew.

That Norton's political career was the outcome of Carolina Langdon's ambition to shine in gay society was known to his friends as well as his family, and his desire to win her and place her where she could satisfy every whim had developed almost to a frenzy. Seeing evidences of Senator Stevens' vast influence, he did not hesitate to seek a close relationship with him, and the Senator was clever enough to lead Norton to consider him his friend.

At the start of his political career Norton had higher ideas of honor than guided his actions now that he had become a part of the political machine that controlled his native State of Mississippi, and of the bipartisan combination that dominated both houses of Congress in the interest of the great rail-

way and industrial corporations. Senator Stevens and other powers had so distorted Norton's view of the difference between public and private interests and their respective rights that he had come to believe captial to be the sacred heritage of the nation which must be protected at any cost. The acceptance of a retainer from the C. St. and P. Railroad Company for wholly unnecessary services in Washington—only another way of buying a man—a transaction arranged by Senator Stevens, was but another stage in the disintegration of the young Congressman's character, but it brought him just that much closer to the point where he could claim Carolina Langdon as his own. And opportunity does not knock twice at a man's door—unless he is at the head of the machine.

Norton, the persevering young law student who loved the girl who had been his boyhood playmate, was now Norton who coveted her father's lands, who boasted that he was on the "inside" in Washington, who was on the way to fortune—if the new Senator from Mississippi would or could be forced to stand in favor of the Atlacoola naval base.

His conversation with Randolph Langdon, as Haines and Cullen saw them pass through the hotel lobby, illustrated the nature of the Norton of the present and his interest in the Altacoola scheme.

"There's no reason why you shouldn't come in on the ground floor in this proposition, Randolph," he was urging in continuance of the conversation begun over a table in the café. "No reason why you shouldn't do it, my boy. Why, are you still a child, or are you really a man? You have now drafts for $50,000, haven't you?"

"Yeah," agreed Langdon, chagrined at Norton's

insinuation of youthfulness and anxious to prove that he was really a man of affairs, "I've got the fifty thousand, Charlie, but—but, you see, that's the money for improvements on the plantation. As father has put me in as manager I want to make a showing."

"You can't make it until spring," urged Norton. "The money's got to lie in the bank all winter. Now, why don't you make a hundred thousand with it instead of letting it lie idle? Isn't that simple?"

The younger man's eyes opened wide, and his imagination, stimulated by the special brand of Bourbon whisky Norton had ordered for him, took rapid bounds.

"One hundred thousand! You mean I could make a hundred thousand with my fifty between now and spring?"

"Sure as a nigger likes gin," replied Norton, confidently.

"How?" asked Langdon.

The young Congressman leaned over confidentially.

"This is under your hat, Randolph. You can keep quiet?"

Langdon nodded eagerly.

"Then put it into Altacoola land."

"The naval base?" gasped Langdon.

Norton nodded.

"Now you've hit it. The Government will select Altacoola for a naval base. Then land will jump 'way up to never, and you'll clean up a hundred thousand at the least. Isn't it simple? There are a thousand people with money who would just love to have this chance. And I'm giving it to you because of our friendship. I want to do you a good turn. I've got my money in there."

Young Langdon was visibly impressed.

"You've always—treated me right, Charlie; you've been for me, I know. But suppose the Government doesn't select Altacoola. Gulf City's in the running."

Norton laughed sarcastically.

"Gulf City is a big bunch of mud flats. Besides, I'll tell you something else. Just between us, remember." He waited for the boy's eager nod before he went on. "The big men are behind Altacoola. Standard Steel wants Altacoola, and what Standard Steel wants from Congress you can bet your bottom dollar Standard Steel gets. They know their business at No. 10 Broadway. Now, then, are you satisfied?"

Randolph was more than satisfied. Already he felt himself rich, and honestly rich, too, for Norton had convinced him that there was no reason why he should not use the $50,000 of his father's, when it had to lie in the bank anyhow all winter, and he would have it back in time to use on the plantation in the spring when it was needed. How proud of him his father would be when he showed him a clear profit of $100,000!

"I'll go get the drafts at once, Charlie, and I'm mighty much obliged to you," he said, with gratitude in his voice.

Norton's smile was one of deep satisfaction.

"That's all right, Randolph. You know I want to do anything I can for you."

Randolph was starting for his room when Haines and Cullen turned sharply around the corner of the hotel desk. Again Bud and the young Southerner accidentally collided.

"Where are you going? Can't you look out?" blurted Langdon.

Haines grinned.

"Guess it's your fault this time."

"Oh, it is, is it?" irritably replied Randolph, who as the "young marse" had been accustomed to considerable deference on the plantation. "Well, take that," he angrily cried, aiming a savage swing at Haines.

The reporter's athletic training proved of ready service. Dodging under the clenched fist, he turned dexterously, seized young Langdon's outstretched wrist and bent the arm down over his (Haines') shoulder as though to throw the young attacker with the wrestler's "flying mare." Langdon was helpless, as Haines had also secured his free hand, but instead of completing the "throw" the reporter walked away with his foe held securely on his back —to put him to bed, a kindly service, in view of Randolph's mental state.

From across the lobby Charles Norton had watched Randolph's discomfiting encounter with Haines with amusement.

"Now that I've got the young fellow to sew up his old man's money in Altacoola land," he chuckled, "reckon Senator William H. Langdon won't see anything wrong with that same noble tract of universe when he comes to vote for the naval base. Senator Stevens will be pleased."

CHAPTER IV

"JUST THE MAN WE NEED"

As Bud Haines returned from young Langdon's room, where he had left the latter in bed, with a towel filled with cracked ice around his head, he saw two familiar figures standing in a secluded corner of the lobby. They were talking earnestly in a low voice.

"Whew!" whistled the newspaper man. "It must be something important that brings both the boss of the Senate and Stevens of Mississippi here."

"Good-afternoon, Haines. How are you?" Senator Stevens said, cordially, as, looking up, he saw the newspaper man approaching. "Senator Peabody, you know Haines, don't you? The brightest young correspondent in Washington."

Senator Peabody of Pennsylvania, the leading power in the upper house, was a man of commanding character and of strong personality. The fact he used these attributes to advance in the Senate the financial interests of himself, of Standard Steel and other commercial organizations met with very little protest in Washington. That he deserved the title frequently used in referring to him, "boss of the Senate," none would deny who had knowledge of the inner workings of the Senate and the various committees.

Senator Peabody was very affable to the re-

porters, especially to those of Haines' stamp, who had never accepted any favors from him and who opposed his methods. He aimed to win the friendship of these opponents by diplomacy—as he had found that reporters of the Haines sort could not be influenced by money. He considered a reporter who would take a bribe as a constructive, conservative member of society, and frequently regretted that so many of the correspondents sent to Washington could not be bought nor had bills they wanted passed or defeated. He extended his hand to Haines as Stevens concluded and said, warmly:

"Of course I know the representative of the *Morning Star!* How do you do, Haines?"

"I wonder if we're not all here on the same errand," suggested the newspaper man.

Senator Peabody appeared to be all candor.

"We came to call on Senator Langdon, Senator Stevens' new colleague," he said.

Bud Haines opened his eyes wide. "By Jove! Langdon stock is going up when the chairman of the naval committee drops in to welcome him."

"You see, Langdon went in on a naval base platform," explained Stevens. "Our section of the South is red hot in favor of the Government spending its naval base appropriation right there."

"Certainly," interrupted Haines, "but——"

"And, there being a vacancy on the committee on naval affairs," continued Stevens, whose dignity was offended by the reporter's interruption, "the friends of Senator Langdon are working to have him appointed on that committee, because he comes from the State where the naval base will be located and will, like myself, be more familiar with the availability of the various sites suggested than a man from another State."

Haines nodded.

"Yes, of course. What town's going to get it, Senator?"

Senator Stevens paused judiciously.

"Well," he said, "Altacoola and Gulf City are the chief candidates. I suppose you had better talk to Langdon about it."

The reporter smiled.

"That's just what I came for, Senator, but I have to go up to the War Department now. When Senator Langdon comes will you be kind enough to tell him I want to interview him?"

Stevens bowed cordially.

"Indeed I shall. I'll tell him he's in luck to have the smartest young man in Washington on the job."

"All right," laughed Bud, "only don't make it so strong that he won't recognize me when he sees me. Good-day." And he hurried away to keep a belated appointment.

"Clever boy," said Stevens as the newspaper man disappeared.

The boss of the Senate agreed.

"Yes, only I'm not sure it's a good thing for a newspaper man to be too clever. Spoils his usefulness. Makes him ask too many confounded questions."

Stevens acquiesced, for it would never do to disagree with the boss.

"It's very kind of you, Senator," he began, changing the subject, "to come with me to welcome the new Senator from my State, my old friend and colleague."

An inscrutable smile—a smile, yet a cold one—accompanied Peabody's answer.

"I have always found, Stevens," he said, "that a little attention like this to a new man is never

wasted, and I make it a rule not to overlook opportunities."

Again the senior Senator from Mississippi acquiesced, and he laughed heartily at Peabody's keen insight into human nature.

"I think you'll like Langdon," Stevens remarked after a pause, "and you'll find him easy to deal with. Just put up any measure for the benefit of the South and Langdon will go the limit on it. Even a Republican majority doesn't mind a little Democratic support, you know. I think he's just the man you can use in this gulf naval base bill."

"You can swing him?" asked Peabody, sharply.

Stevens drew closer to Peabody.

"I elected him, and he knows it," he chuckled.

The boss nodded.

"And it's likely that a man like Langdon, new to politics—a simple gentleman of the old school, as you describe him—might have considerable influence on opinion throughout the country."

Langdon's colleague grasped the arm of the senatorial dictator.

"He's just the man we want, Senator. He's one of those old fellows you just have to believe when he talks. He'll do what I suggest, and he can make the public believe what we think."

"Then you guarantee him?" snapped the boss.

"Unreservedly, Senator."

"All right," said Peabody. "He goes on the naval committee. That ought to be enough honor for a man who a year ago was growing cotton on an old plantation miles away from civilization."

"We have control now of all the land about Altacoola that can be used," said Stevens. "I have had Norton, the Congressman from Langdon's district, working on it. There isn't a foot of land

there which we do not now control under options, and," he added, with a chuckle, "the options were dirt cheap."

Peabody grunted approvingly.

"There won't be any New York fortune in it, but it ought to be a pretty tidy bit," he said. "Now, if we could only get Langdon interested, directly or indirectly, in a financial way, that would clinch everything."

The senior Senator from Mississippi shook his head.

"It's too risky. He's old-fashioned, you know—has about as much idea about practical politics as —well, as we have of the Golden Rule. Fact is, he rather lives by that antiquated standard. That's where we get him. He owes everything to me, you see, so naturally he'll do anything I want him to. By the way, there's Norton now. Perhaps he can tell us something."

"Call him over," said Peabody.

Norton had been strolling about the lobby, hoping to be noticed. The flame had lured the moth, and it liked the manner of the singeing. The Congressman hurried precipitately across at Stevens' summons.

"I've been wanting to speak to you, gentlemen," said Norton, full of the good trick he had turned, "but I didn't like to interrupt you. I think I've done a big stroke for Altacoola to-day."

Even Peabody pricked up his ears.

"Yes?" said both Senators together.

With a keen sense of the dramatic, the Congressman let his next words drawl out with full effect.

"I've got Senator Langdon interested—financially interested," he said.

His two hearers exchanged a significant glance.

"How?" asked Peabody, sharply.

Norton smiled shrewdly.

"Well, I just let his son invest $50,000 of the Senator's money in Altacoola land. That ought to help some."

Stevens stared in amazement at his Congressman, his eyes threatening to bulge out of his head.

"What!" he gasped. "You got Langdon's money in Altacoola, through his son?"

"I sure have, Senator," chuckled Norton. "He's in to the extent of fifty thousand, and I've promised that the fifty shall make a hundred by spring."

"It'll make three hundred thousand at least," snapped Peabody. "Norton, you've done a good day's work. By the way, a New York client of mine has a little business that I cannot attend to handily. Doesn't involve much work, and a young, hustling lawyer like you ought to take charge of it easily. The fee, I should say, would be about $10,000. Have you the time to undertake it?"

The Congressman drew a long breath. His eyes beamed with gratitude.

"I should say I have, Senator. Of course, it won't interfere with any of my duties as a Congressman."

Peabody smiled.

"Of course not, Norton. I see that your sense of humor is improving. If convenient, run over to New York the last of the week. I'll give you a card. My client's office is at 10 Broadway."

The ruler of the Senate nodded a curt dismissal.

"Thank you, Senator; thank you very much." And Norton bowed and left, rejoicing.

Peabody turned to Stevens.

"You see, even a Congressman can be useful sometimes," remarked Stevens, dryly.

"Keep your eye on that young man, Stevens. He's the most valuable Congressman we've had from your State in a long while. Does just what he is told and doesn't ask any fool questions. This was good work. Langdon's on the naval committee now sure. Come, Stevens; let's go to some quiet corner in the smoking-room. I want to talk to you about something else the Standard has on hand for you to do."

Hardly had they departed from the lobby when resounding commotion at the entrance, followed by the rushing of porters and bellboys and an expectant pose on the part of the clerk, indicated that the new Senator from Mississippi had arrived.

CHAPTER V

THE BOSS OF THE SENATE INSPECTS A NEW MEMBER

An actor playing the rôle of a high type of Southern planter would score a decided success by picturing the character exactly after the fashion of Senator William H. Langdon as he strode to the desk of the International Hotel. A wide-brimmed black hat thrust back on his head, a long black perfecto in his mouth, coattails spreading out behind as he walked, and the "Big Bill" Langdon smile on his face that carried sunshine and good will wherever he went, he was good to look on, an inspiration, particularly in Washington.

Following the Senator were Miss Langdon and Hope Georgia, leading a retinue of hotel attendants staggering under a large assortment of luggage. Both beautiful girls, they caused a sensation all of their own. Carolina, a different type from the younger, had an austere loveliness denoting pride and birth, a brunette of the quality that has contributed so much to the fame of Southern women. Hope Georgia, more girlish, and a vivacious blonde, was the especial pet of her father, and usually succeeded in doing with him what she chose.

A real Senator and two such young women handsomely gowned seemed to take the old hotel back a score of years—back to the times when such sights were of daily occurrence. The ancient greatness of the now dingy International lived again.

"How are you, Senator? Glad to welcome you, sir," was the clerk's greeting.

The genial Senator held out his hand. Everybody was his friend.

"Glad to meet you, sir; glad to meet you," he exclaimed. "Must make you acquainted with my daughters. This is Miss Carolina Langdon, this Miss Hope Georgia Langdon."

The two girls, with their father's idea of courtesy, shook hands with the clerk, who was not at all taken aback by the unexpected honor.

Hope Georgia was thoroughly delighted with everything, but Carolina looked at the worn and faded walls and furnishings with evident distaste.

"Oh, this is Washington," murmured Hope Georgia ecstatically, clasping her hands and gazing at a vista of artificial palms in a corridor.

"Ah, this is Washington," sighed the new Senator contentedly, as he gazed across a hall at the biggest and most gorgeous cigar stand he had ever seen or ever hoped to see—the only new thing added to the hotel since Grant was President.

"Truly magnificent establishment you have here, sir; magnificent!" he exclaimed as an imitation marble column came within his purview. "I remember my friend Senator Moseley speaking to me of it thirty years ago. Are our rooms ready?"

The clerk, hugely pleased, hastened to assure him that everything was in first-class order, waiting.

"You better go up, girls, while I look around a bit and sort of get the hang of things."

"Yes, I think we had better look around a bit, too, before we decide, father," said Carolina, diplomatically.

Her father patted her affectionately on the arm.

"Now, don't you worry, Carolina. I see you think this place too expensive from its looks—too good for us. But I tell you the best, even this, isn't too good for you girls and your dad. Run away, and I'll come up and see you soon."

The new Senator leaned his elbow on the desk, surveying the place.

"I understand this is a favorite haunt for the big men of Washington," he said.

The clerk eagerly agreed.

"Yes, indeed, Senator; we have them all. Senator Peabody and Senator Stevens were here just a moment ago. Boy, find Senator Peabody and Senator Stevens and tell them Senator Langdon is here."

The two Senators came quickly.

"I'm glad to see you, Langdon; glad to see you," exclaimed Stevens, with an assumption of effusiveness. "I want to introduce you to Senator Peabody of Pennsylvania."

Peabody bowed, and Langdon held out his hand.

"I'm delighted to meet you, Senator. This is a proud day for me, sir."

Peabody had put on his smoothest and most polished manner.

"I came especially to meet you, Senator Langdon," he said. "Although we are on different sides we may be interested in the same things. I hope we shall see a great deal of each other."

Langdon chuckled.

"That's mighty good of you, Senator. I'm depending on you experienced fellows to put me through. Don't know much about this lawmaking business, you know. Raising cotton, arguing the Government and bossing niggers have been about

the extent of my occupation for the last forty years, so I reckon I'm not much of a practical lawmaker."

"Oh, you'll learn; you'll learn quickly," assured Peabody. "With Stevens, here, for a guide you can't go wrong. We all look up to Stevens. He's one of the powers on your side. He's an able man, is Stevens."

The new Senator from Mississippi gladly corroborated this.

"You're right, sir. A great man! I tell you, when he told that Legislature what they ought to do, Senator Peabody, they did it. If it wasn't for Stevens I wouldn't be here now."

In mock protest the senior Senator from Mississippi raised his hands.

"Now, now, Langdon, don't say that. Your worth, your integrity, your character and our old friendship got you the senatorship."

The old planter laughed gleefully.

"Sure, Stevens, I have the character and the integrity, but I reckon the character and integrity wouldn't have done much business if you hadn't had the Legislature."

Clearly delighted, Peabody considered it certain that this new Senator knew just the way he should go and would cause no difficulty. His keen sense of gratitude made him appreciate how he had been elected. Peabody literally beamed on Langdon.

"I hope we shall be able to work a good deal together, Senator," he said. "I have the interests of the South at heart, particularly with regard to this new naval base. Perhaps we may be able to get you on the naval committee."

"Me!" laughed Langdon. "Well, that would be going strong! But I tell you I'm for the naval base."

"For Altacoola?" suggested Stevens.

Langdon hesitated. Peabody and Stevens watched him as eagles watch their prey from the mountain crag.

"Well, it looks to me like Altacoola ought to be a fine site. But the actual place isn't so important to me. I tell you, gentlemen," he said in impressive seriousness that rang with sturdy American manhood—"I tell you that what is important is that the great, sweeping curve of the gulf shall hold some of those white ships of ours to watch over the Indies and the canal and to keep an eye on South America.

"And right there on our own Southern coast I want these ships built and equipped and the guns cast and the men found to man them. I want the South to have her part in the nation's defense. I want her to have this great naval city as the living proof that there is again just one country—the United States—and the North and the South both have forgiven."

Senator Peabody clapped the new member on the back.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "You've got to make some speeches like that. We'll have you as the orator for the naval base."

Langdon's eyes opened wide.

"Orator!" he gasped. "Me! An orator!"

"Why, that was oratory, good oratory," exclaimed Stevens, with enthusiasm.

"Huh!" grunted the planter. "You call that ora tory. Why, that was only the truth."

"We'll see that you do some more of it, then," laughed Peabody. "Remember, we count on you for the naval base."

"For rural simplicity he's perfection," whis-

pered Peabody to Stevens as they left the planter. "He's a living picture of innocence. We'll push him forward and let him do the talking for the naval affairs committee. Hiding behind him, we could put through almost any kind of a proposition."

Once more did the senior Senator from Mississippi acquiesce.

CHAPTER VI

NEW FRIENDS—AND AN OLD ENEMY

LANGDON gazed at the two departing Senators with varied emotions. He sat down to think over what they had said and to carefully consider what manner of man was Peabody, who showed such an interest in him. He realized that he would have considerable intercourse with Peabody in the processes of legislation, and finally had to admit to himself that he did not like the Senator from Pennsylvania. Just what it was Langdon could not at this time make certain, but he was mystified by traces of contradictions in the Senator's character—slight traces, true, but traces nevertheless. Peabody's cordiality and sympathy were to Langdon's mind partly genuine and partly false. Just what was the cause of or the necessity for the alloy in the true metal he could not fathom.

His talk with these famous lawmakers was unsatisfactory also in that it had conveyed to Langdon the suggestion that the Senate was not primarily a great forum for the general and active consideration of weighty measures and of national policies. It had been his idea that the Senate was primarily such a forum, but the attitude of Peabody and Stevens had hinted to him that there were matters of individual interest that outweighed public or national considerations. For instance, they were anxious that Altacoola should have the

naval base regardless of the claims or merits of any other section. That was unusual, puzzling to Langdon. Moreover, it was poor business, yet there were able business men in the Senate. Not one of them would, for instance, think of buying a site for a factory until he had investigated many possible locations and then selected the most favorable one. Why was it, he pondered, that the business of the great United States of America was not conducted on business lines?

He must study the whole question intelligently; that was imperative. He must have advice, help. To whom was he to go for it? Stevens? Yes, his old friend, who knew all "the ropes." Yet even Stevens seemed different in Washington than Stevens in Mississippi. Here he played "second fiddle." He was even obsequious, Langdon had observed, to Peabody. In Mississippi he was a leader, and a strong one, too. But Senator Langdon had not yet learned of the many founts from which political strength and political leadership may be gained.

What he finally decided on was the engaging of a secretary, but he must be one with knowledge of political operations, one who combined wisdom with honesty. Such an aid could prevent Langdon from making the many mistakes that invariably mark the new man in politics, and he could point out the most effective modes of procedure under given circumstances. It might prove difficult to find a man of the necessary qualifications who was not already employed, but in the meantime Langdon would watch the playing of the game himself and make his own deductions as best he could.

The Senator started toward the hotel desk to ask regarding the whereabouts of his son Randolph,

when his attention was caught by the sight of three powerful negro porters endeavoring to thrust outdoors a threadbare old man. The victim's flowing white hair, white mustache and military bearing received short shrift.

"Come along, Colonel! Yo' can't sit heah all day. Them chairs is for the guests in the hotel," the head porter was urging as he jerked the old man toward the door.

The Mississippian's fighting blood was instantly aroused at such treatment of a respectable old white man by negroes. His lips tightly compressed as he hurried to the rescue. He cried sharply:

"Take your hands off that gentleman! What do you mean by touching a friend of mine?"

The negroes stepped back amazed.

"'Scuse me, Senator, is this gent'man a friend of yours?" the head porter gasped apologetically.

Langdon looked at him.

"You heard what I said," he drawled in the slow way natural to some men of the South when trouble threatens. "I'd like to have you down in Mississippi for about ten minutes."

The head porter turned quickly on his assistants and drove them away, shouting at the top of his voice:

"Get about yo' wuk. How dare yo' intehfere wid a friend of de Senator's? I'll teach yo' to be putting yoh nose in where it ain't got no business."

The old man, astonished at the turn of events, came forward hesitatingly to Langdon.

"I'm very much obliged to you, sir," he said. "I'm Colonel Stoneman, an old soldier."

The Mississippian stretched forth his hand.

"My name is Langdon, sir—Senator Langdon of Mississippi. I am an old soldier, too."

"Delighted, Senator," exclaimed the seedy-looking old man, taking the offered hand gratefully.

Langdon's easy method of making friends was well illustrated as he clapped his new companion on the back. Everybody he met was the Mississippian's friend until he had proved himself the contrary. That had been his rule through life.

"Come right over, Colonel; have a cigar, sir." Then, as they lighted their cigars, he inquired, "What army corps were you with, Colonel?"

"I was under Grant along the Tennessee," replied the old G. A. R. man.

Familiarity with a Senator was something new for him, and already he was straightening up and becoming more of a man every moment. Langdon was thoroughly interested.

"I was along the Tennessee under Beauregard," he said.

"Great generals, sir! Great generals!" exclaimed Colonel Stoneman.

"And great fighting, I reckon!" echoed the Confederate. "You remember the battle of Crawfordsville?"

The old Federal smiled with joyous recollection.

"Do I? Well, I should say I did! Were you there, Senator?"

"Was I there? Why, I remember every shot that was fired. I was under Kirby, who turned your left wing."

The attitude of the Northern soldier changed instantly. He drew himself up with cold dignity. Plainly he felt that he had the honor of his army to sustain.

"Our left wing was never turned, sir!" he exclaimed with dignity.

Langdon stared at him with amazement. This

was a point of view the Confederate had never heard before.

"Never turned!" he gasped. "Don't tell me that! I was there, and, besides, I've fought this battle on an average of twice a week ever since '65 down in Mississippi, and in all these years I never heard such a foolish statement."

"What rank were you, sir?" asked the Union soldier, haughtily.

"I was a captain that morning," confessed the Southerner.

His old enemy smiled with superiority.

"As a colonel I've probably got more accurate information," he said.

"I was a colonel that evening," came the dry retort.

"But in an inferior army. We licked you, sir!" cried Stoneman, hotly.

The Mississippian drew himself up with all the dignity common to the old Confederate soldier explaining the war.

"The South was never whipped, sir. We honorably surrendered, sir. We surrendered to save the country, sir, but we were never whipped."

"Did you not run at Kenyon Hill?" taunted Stoneman.

Langdon brought down his fist in the palm of the other hand violently.

"Yes, sir; we ran at you. I ought to remember. I got my wound there. You remember that long lane——" He pulled off his hat and threw it on the floor, indicating it with one hand—"Here was the Second Alabama."

The hat of the old Federal dropped on the floor opposite the hat of the Confederate.

"And here the Eighth Illinois," exclaimed Stoneman.

Langdon excitedly seized a diminutive bellboy passing by and planted him alongside his hat.

"Stay there a moment, sonny," he cried. "You are the Fourth Virginia."

The newspaper Stoneman was carrying came down opposite the startled bellboy, who was trying not to appear frightened.

"This is the clump of cedars," he exclaimed.

Both, in their eagerness, were bending down over their improvised battle plan, their heads close together.

"And here a farmhouse beside your cedars," cried Langdon.

"That's where the rebels charged us," echoed the Union man.

Langdon brought down his fist again with emphatic gesture.

"You bet we charged you! The Third Mississippi charged you! I charged you, sir!"

Stoneman nodded.

"I remember a young fool of a Johnnie reb dashing up the hill fifty yards ahead of his men, waving his sword and yelling like a wild Indian."

The Southerner straightened up.

"Well, where in thunderation would you expect me to be, sir?" he exclaimed. "Behind them? I got my wound there. Laid me up for three months; like to have killed me."

Then a new idea struck him. "Why, Colonel, it must have been a bullet from one of your men —from your regiment, sir!"

The old Northerner pushed his fingers through his hair and shook his head apologetically.

"Why, Senator, I'm afraid it was," he hesitated.

Langdon's eyes were big with the afterglow of a fighter discussing the mighty struggles of the past, those most precious of all the jewels in the treasure store of a soldier's memory.

"Why, it might have been a bullet fired by you, sir," he cried. "It might be that you were the man who almost killed me. Why, confound you, sir, I'm glad to meet you!"

Each old veteran of tragic days gone by had quite unconsciously awakened a responsive chord in the heart of the other. A Senator and a penniless old "down and outer" are very much the same in the human scale that takes note of the inside and not the outside of a man. And they fell into each other's arms then and there, for what strong fighter does not respect another of his kind?

There they stood, arms around each other, clapping each other on the back, actually chortling in the pure ecstasy of comradeship, now serious, again laughing, when on the scene appeared Bud Haines, the correspondent, who had returned to interview the new Senator from Mississippi.

"Great heavens!" ejaculated the newspaper man. "A Senator, a United States Senator, hugging a broken-down old 'has-been!' What is the world coming to?" Haines suddenly paused. "I wonder if it can be a pose—merely for effect. It's getting harder every day to tell what's genuine and what isn't in this town."

CHAPTER VII

LANGDON LEARNS OF THINGS UNPLEASANT

HAINES quickly walked over and touched the Southerner on the arm.

"Well, my boy, what can I do for you?" asked the new Senator, turning with a pleasant smile.

"My name is Haines. Senator Stevens was to speak to you about me. I'm the first of the newspaper correspondents come to interview you."

Langdon's familiar smile broadened.

"Well, you don't look as though you'd bite. Reckon I can stand for it. Is it very painful?"

"I hope it won't be, Senator," Haines said, feeling instinctively that he was going to like this big, hearty citizen.

"All right, Mr. Haines, just as soon as I've said good-by to my old friend, Colonel Stoneman, I'll be with you."

And to his continued amazement Haines saw the Senator walk away with the old Union Colonel, slap him on the back, cheer him up and finally bid him good-by after extending a cordial invitation to come around to dinner, meet his daughters and talk over old times.

The antiquated Federal soldier marched away more erect, more brisk, than in years, completely restored to favor in the eyes of the hotel people. Langdon turned to the reporter.

"All right, Mr. Haines; my hands are up. Do

your worst. Senator Stevens spoke to me about you; said you were the smartest young newspaper man in Washington. You must come from the South."

Bud shook his head.

"No, just New York," he said.

"Well, that's a promising town," drawled the Southerner. "They tell me that's the Vicksburg of the North."

"I suppose you haven't been to New York of late, Senator?" suggested the newspaper man.

"Well, I started up there with General Lee once," responded Langdon reminiscently, "but we changed our minds and came back. You may have heard about that trip."

Haines admitted that he had.

"Since that time," went on Langdon, "I've confined my travels to New Orleans and Vicksburg. Ever been in New Orleans about Mardi Gras time, Mr. Haines?"

"Sorry, but I don't believe I have," confessed the reporter reluctantly.

The Senator seemed surprised.

"Well, sir, you have something to live for. I'll make it my special business to personally conduct you through one Mardi Gras, with a special understanding, of course, that you don't print anything in the paper. I'm a vestryman in my church, but since misfortune has come upon our State I have to be careful."

Haines searched his brain. He knew of no grave calamity that had happened recently in Mississippi.

"Misfortune?" he questioned.

Senator Langdon nodded.

"Yes, sir, the great old State of Mississippi went prohibition at the last election. I don't know how

"FROM NEW YORK, EH? THE VICKSBURG OF THE NORTH."—Page 54.

it happened. We haven't found anybody in the State that says he voted for it, but the fact is a fact. I assure you, Mr. Haines, that prohibition stops at my front door, in Mississippi. So I've been living a quiet life down on my plantation."

"This new life will be a great change for you, then?" suggested the reporter.

"Change! It's revolutionary, sir! When you've expected to spend your old days peacefully in the country, Mr. Haines, suddenly to find that your State has called on you——"

A flavor of sarcasm came into Haines' reply.

"The office seeking the man?" He could not help the slight sneer. Was a man never to admit that he had sought the office? Haines knew only too well of the arduous work necessary to secure nominations for high office in conventions and to win an election to the Senate from a State Legislature. In almost every case, he knew, the candidate must make a dozen different "deals" to secure votes, might promise the same office to two or three different leaders, force others into line by threats, send a trusted agent to another with a roll of bank bills—the recipient of which would immediately conclude that this candidate was the only man in the State who could save the nation from destruction. Had not Haines seen men who had sold their unsuspecting delegates for cash to the highest bidder rise in the convention hall and in impassioned, dramatic voice exclaim in praise of the buyer, "Gentlemen, it would be a crying shame, a crime against civilization, if the chosen representatives of our grand old State of —— did not go on record in favor of such a man, such a true citizen, such an inspired patriot, as he whose name I am about to mention"? So the reporter

may be forgiven for the ironical tinge in his hasty interruption of the new Senator's remarks.

Langdon could not suppress a chuckle at the doubting note in Haines' attitude.

"I think the man would be pretty small potatoes who wouldn't seek the office of United States Senator, Mr. Haines," he said, "if he could get it. When I was a young man, sir, politics in the South was a career for a gentleman, and I still can't see how he could be better engaged than in the service of his State or his country."

"That's right," agreed the reporter, further impressed by the frank sincerity of the Mississippian.

"The only condition in my mind, Mr. Haines, is that the man should ask himself searchingly whether or not he's competent to give the service. But I seem to be talking a good deal. Suppose we get to the interview. Expect your time is short. We'd better begin."

"I thought we were in the interview?" smiled the correspondent.

"In it!" exclaimed Langdon. "Well, if this is it, it isn't so bad. I see you use a painless method. When I was down in Vicksburg a reporter backed me up in a corner, slipped his hand in his hip pocket and pulled out a list of questions just three feet four inches long.

"He wanted to know what I thought concerning the tariff on aluminium hydrates, and how I stood about the opening of the Tento Pu Reservation of the Comanche Indians, and what were my ideas about the differential rate of hauls from the Missouri River.

"He was a wonder, that fellow! Kinder out of place on a Mississippi paper. I started to offer him a job, but he was so proud I was afraid he

wouldn't accept it. However, it gives you my idea of a reporter."

"If you've been against that, I ought to thank you for talking to me," laughed Haines.

"Then you don't want to know anything about that sort of stuff?" said Langdon, with a huge sigh of relief.

"No, Senator," was the amused reply. "I think generally if I know what sort of a man a man is I can tell a great deal about what he will think on various questions."

Langdon started interestedly.

"You mean, Mr. Haines, if you know whether I'm honest or not you can fit me up with a set of views. Is that the idea? Seems to me you're the sort of man I'm looking for."

The other smilingly shook his head.

"I wouldn't dare fix up a United States Senator with a set of views," he said. "I only mean that I think what a man is is important. I've been doing Washington for a number of years. I've had an exceptional opportunity to see how politics work. I don't believe in party politics. I don't believe in parties, but I do believe in men."

Langdon nodded approvingly, then a twinkle shone in his eyes.

"We don't believe in parties in Mississippi," he drawled. "We've only one—the Democratic party—and a few kickers."

Haines grinned broadly at this description of Southern politics.

"What was this you were saying about national politics?" continued the Mississippian. "I'm a beginner, you know, and I'm always ready to learn."

"This is a new thing—a reporter teaching a Senator politics," laughed Haines.

Senator Langdon joined in the merriment.

"I reckon reporters could teach United States Senators lots of things, Mr. Haines, if the Senators had sense enough to go to school. Now, I come up here on a platform the chief principle of which is the naval base for the gulf. Now, how are we going to put that through? My State wants it."

"You're probably sure it will be a wonderful thing for the country and the South," suggested Haines.

"Of course."

"But why do you think most of the Congressmen and Senators will vote for it?"

The Southerner took off his hat, leaned back and gazed across the lobby thoughtfully.

"Seems to me the benefit to the South and country would be sufficient reason, Mr. Haines," he finally replied.

The newspaper man's brain worked rapidly. Going over the entire conversation with Langdon and what he had seen of him, he was certain that the Mississippian believed what he said—that, moreover, the belief was deeply rooted. His long newspaper training had educated Haines in the ways of men, their actions and mental processes—what naturally to expect from a given set of circumstances. He felt a growing regard, an affection, for this unassuming old man before him, who did not know and probably would be slow to understand the hypocrisy, the cunning trickery of lawmakers who unmake laws.

"Sufficient reason for you, Senator," Haines added. "You have not been in politics very long, have you?" he queried dryly.

A wry smile wrinkled the Mississippian's face.

"Been in long enough to learn some unpleasant

things I didn't know before." He remembered Martin Sanders.

"Will you allow me to tell you a few more?" asked Haines.

Langdon inclined his head in acquiescence. "Reckon I'd better know the worst and get through with it."

"Well, then, Senator, somebody from Nebraska will vote for what you want in the way of the naval base because he'll think then you'll help him demand money to dredge some muddy creek that he has an interest in.

"Somebody in Pennsylvania will vote for it because he owes a grudge and wants to hurt the Philadelphia ship people.

"You'll get the Democrats because it's for the South, but if your bill was for the west coast they might fight it tooth and nail, even with the Japanese fleet cruising dangerously near.

"And the Republicans may vote for it because they see a chance to claim glory and perhaps break the solid South in the next presidential campaign. You catch the idea?"

"What!" exclaimed the astounded Langdon. "Well, who in hades will vote for it because it's for the good of the United States?" he gasped.

"I believe you will, Senator," replied Haines, with ready confidence.

CHAPTER VIII

HOW SENATOR LANGDON GETS A SECRETARY

LANGDON leaned over and seized the arm of his interviewer.

"See here, young man, why aren't you in politics?" he said.

"Too busy, Senator," replied Haines. "Besides, I like the newspaper game."

"Game?" queried Langdon.

"Oh, I use the word in a general sense, Senator," replied Haines. "Pretty much everything is a 'game'—society, politics, newspaper work, business of every sort. Men and women make 'moves' to meet the moves of other men and women. Why, even in religion, the way some people play a——"

The speaker was interrupted by the appearance of Hope Georgia, who was searching for her father.

"Stay here and listen to what a hard task your old father has got," said the Mississippian to his daughter, whom he presented to Haines with a picturesque flourish reminiscent of the pride and chivalry of the old South. "He has the idea that those New Yorkers who read his paper would actually like to know something about me."

Hope Georgia stole many glances at the reporter as he talked with her father. He made a deep impression on her young mind. She had spent almost all her life on the plantation, her father providing her with a private tutor instead of sending her

to boarding-school, where her elder sister had been educated. Owing to the death of her mother the planter had desired to keep Hope Georgia at home for companionship. This good-looking, clean-cut, well-built young man who was taking so big and so active a part of the world's work brought to her the atmosphere that her spirit craved. He gave one an impression of ability, of earnestness, of sincerity, and she was glad that her father approved of him.

Hope Georgia, by the same token, did not escape the attention of the interviewer. Her appealing charm of face and figure was accentuated by her daintiness and a fleeting suggestion of naïveté in poise and expression when she was amused. His first glance revealed to Haines that her eyes were gray, the gray that people say indicates the possessor to have those priceless qualities—the qualities that make the sweetest women true, that make the maiden's eyes in truth the windows of her soul, the qualities that make women womanly.

She sat close to her father, her hand in his, listening intently to the unfolding of a story of what to her was a mysterious world—the man's world, the strong man's world—which many a woman would give her all to enter and play a part therein.

"What else have you against a political career, Mr. Haines?" went on the Senator, taking up their conversation.

"Well, my age, for one thing. I haven't any gray hairs."

Langdon waved this objection aside.

"I might arrange to pool ages with you. Sometimes I think we want young men in politics, like you."

The reporter shook his head.

"Old in age and young in politics, like you, Senator Langdon," he replied. "Politics I sometimes think is pure hypocrisy and sometimes something worse. A man gets disgusted with the trickery and dishonesty and corruption."

"Then," drawled Langdon, "the thing to do is to jump in and stop it! I read in the newspapers a great deal about corruption. The gentlemen in national politics whom I have had the honor of knowing—Senator Moseley, an intimate friend of thirty years; my present colleague, Senator Stevens, and others—have been as honest as the day is long."

"But the days do get short in November, when Congress meets, don't they?" laughed Haines, rising. "I'm afraid I've taken too much of your time, and I seem to have talked a lot."

Langdon was amused.

"Does look like I'd been interviewing you. I reckon each one of us has got a pretty good notion of what the other man's like. I wanted it that way, and I like you, Mr. Haines. I've got a proposition to make to you. They tell me I'll need a secretary. Now, I think I need just such a young man as you. I don't know just exactly what the work would be or what the financial arrangements should be, but I think you and I would make a pretty good team. I wish you'd come." He turned to his daughter, with a smile. "What do you think of that, Hope Georgia? Isn't your dad right?"

Smiling her approval, the young girl squeezed her father's hand in her enthusiasm.

"I think it's a splendid idea, dad; just great! Won't you come, Mr. Haines? We—eh—I—I know my father would like to have you."

As he stood before his two new-found friends—for such Haines now considered the Mississippian

and his daughter—he could not suppress feelings of surprise tinged with uncertainty. He had, like other newspaper men, received offers of employment from politicians who desired to increase their influence with the press. Sometimes the salary offered had been large, the work so light that the reporter could "earn" the money and yet retain his newspaper position, a scantily disguised species of bribery, which had wrecked the careers of several promising reporters well known to Haines, young men who had been thus led into "selling their columns" by unscrupulous machine dictators.

Haines knew that the Mississippian had no ulterior purpose to serve in his offer, yet he must have time to think over the proposal.

"I thank you, Senator," he finally said. "I appreciate the opportunity, coming from you, but I've never thought of giving up the newspaper profession. It's a fascinating career, one that I am too fond of to leave."

Langdon started to reply, when a delightfully modulated Southern voice interrupted:

"Father, I've been out with Mrs. Spangler to look for some other rooms. I don't like this hotel, and I found some that I do like."

Haines turned to see a handsomely gowned young woman who had the stamp of a patrician's daughter in her bearing and her countenance—a brunette, with delicate features, though determination shone in her eyes and appeared in the self-contained poise of her head. She was the imperious type of beauty and suggested to Haines the dry point etchings of Paul Helleu. He instinctively conceived her to be intensely ambitious, and of this Haines was soon to have unexpected evidence. Gazing at her with

a sense of growing admiration, Haines gave an involuntary start as Senator Langdon spoke.

"My daughter, Miss Carolina Langdon, Mr. Haines," said the Senator.

Carolina was interested.

"Are you the newspaper man who is interviewing father? I hope you'll do a nice one. We want him to be a successful and popular Senator. We'd like to help him if we could."

The correspondent bowed.

"I should say you certainly would help him to be a popular Senator," he declared, emphatically, failing to notice that Hope Georgia was somewhat annoyed at the enthusiasm displayed over her elder sister. In fact, Hope Georgia was suffering a partial, if not total, eclipse.

"I'm leaving it to Mr. Haines to put down the things I ought to say," broke in the Senator. "He knows."

"Yes, he knows everything about Washington, Carolina," exclaimed Hope Georgia, spiritedly.

The older girl spoke eagerly.

"I wish you'd interview me, Mr. Haines. Ask me how I like Washington. I feel as though I must tell some one just how much I do like it! It is too wonderful!"

"I'd like mighty well to interview you, Miss Langdon," enthusiastically exclaimed Haines.

"I hope you will some time, Mr. Haines," remarked Carolina, as she said good-by.

Watching her as she turned away, Haines saw her extend a warm greeting to Congressman Charles Norton, who had advanced toward the group.

"Strange how the Langdons treat him as a friend —intimate one, too," he thought. "What if they should learn of Norton's questionable operations at

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the Capitol; of his connection with two unsavory 'deals,' one of which resulted in an amendment to the pure food law so that manufacturers of a valueless 'consumption cure' could continue to mislead the victims of the 'white plague'; Norton, who had uttered an epigram now celebrated in the tap-rooms of Washington, 'The paths of glory lead but to the graft.'"

"Miss Langdon is very beautiful and attractive, sir," said Haines, resuming with the Senator.

"Yes," drawled the Mississippian. "Girls in the South generally are."

"Well, I must be going. I'll think about your secretaryship, Senator Langdon. Perhaps I can find some one."

"Wish you'd think about it for yourself," observed the Senator, while Hope Georgia again nodded approval. "It would be a hard job. There are so many matters of political detail about which I am sadly inexperienced that really most of the work would fall on the secretary."

Bud Haines paused. Again he thought over Langdon's offer. Its genuineness appealed to him. Suddenly there dawned on him an idea of just what it might mean to be associated with this honest old citizen who had asked for his help—who needed it, as Haines knew only too well. He would be the Senator's guide and confidant—his adviser in big matters. Why, he would practically be United States Senator himself. He knew the "inside" as few others in Washington. Here was a chance to match his wit against that of Peabody, the boss of the Senate; a chance to spoil some of the dishonest schemes of those who were adroitly "playing the game." He could bother, too, the intriguing members of the "third house," as the lobbyists are called.

He could direct a lightning bolt into the camp of Andy Corrigan, who claimed the honor of being "speaker of the third house." These thoughts crowded into his mind. Then, too, he would become practically a member of the Langdon family and have association with the two charming daughters—with Carolina Langdon.

"It would be a great chance," he murmured half aloud; "next thing to being a Senator."

The old Mississippian heard the young man's words.

"I reckon it would," he drawled, in agreement.

"You feel sure you want me?" urged the other.

Langdon chuckled.

"I asked you," he said.

Haines came abruptly to decision.

"I've thought it over, Senator, and it seems to me it will be a great chance in every way. I'll accept. We'll fix it up to-morrow, and I'll try to make you a good secretary."

Langdon held forth his hand.

"And I'll try to make you a good Senator, my boy. Fix up nothing to-morrow. Your duties begin to-night. You are to come to dinner with me and my daughters."

CHAPTER IX

A NEW KIND OF POLITICAL PARTNERSHIP

THE combination of the forces of Langdon and Haines did not find much favor among the powers that are—at the Capitol. Senator Peabody peremptorily demanded an explanation from Stevens as to how he had allowed "his Senator" to engage as his secretary "this inquisitive man Haines, a reporter who didn't know his place."

"Here we've put Langdon on naval affairs because we knew he didn't understand what's going on, and you, Stevens, supposed to be the finished product of the political mill, *you* fall asleep and let him take up a man whom nobody can control, one who knows the inside workings of Washington and who will take par-tic-u-lar pleasure in teaching your fellow Mississippian far too much for our good."

Stevens' reply, to effect that probably Haines would consent to be "taken care of" if judiciously approached, was derided by the observant Peabody. "A young reformer grows fat on notoriety," he laughed, "and think what a scandal he would have for his newspaper if we took a chance on disclosing our hand to him. No, no, Stevens; we must have him watched and try to discredit him in some way. Perhaps we can make Langdon believe that his secretary is dishonest."

Congressman Norton was another man who was dismayed at the formation of the firm of Langdon

and Haines. Young Randolph, too, could not forget the defeat and humiliation he had previously suffered at Haines' hands and grew more bitter as the reporter's influence over his father grew stronger. But Haines' most effective enemy had arisen in the person he would be the last to suspect; one whom he unceasingly admired, one whose very words he had come to cherish. And possibly it was not all her own fault that Carolina Langdon had enlisted her services, subtle and quite overwhelming (owing to Haines' fervent worship of her), against the secretary. Perhaps the social system of which she had become a part in Washington had something to do with the craving to become a leader in that fascinating world whose dazzling variety and infinite diversion seemed to fill her soul with all that it yearned for. Love she had, for she had now promised to wed Congressman Norton. She loved him fondly, she had confessed to him, and gradually she came to work desperately against Haines, who, she had been convinced by Norton and Randolph, would prove a stumbling-block to them, to her father, to herself in her career at the capital, if his influence over the Senator should be permitted to exist or to increase. And so on the surface Carolina Langdon was most amiable to the secretary, encouraged him in his attentions to her, led him surely into her power, Norton having prevailed on her to keep the knowledge of their engagement secret from every one, even her father.

The days and nights became filled with important work for Senator Langdon and his secretary. Together they went over the important measures, outlined what appeared to be the best course of procedure, and carried it into effect as far as possible. Langdon became a prominent figure in the Senate,

owing to his consistent support of measures that fitted in with the public policy, or what should be the public policy, of the nation. He had learned that the only practicable way to outwit or to cope with the members of the dominating machine, made up, he was surprised to see, of members of both the parties—the only two in Washington—was to oppose what the machine wanted with enough power to force it to grant him what he believed the public ought to have. He was described by some of the hide-bound "insiders" on Capitol Hill as "the only brainy man who had fought the machine in thirty years."

At the home he had later established in Washington as preferable to the International Hotel were frequently seen a small coterie of Senators and Congressmen who had become known to the sarcastic party bosses in both houses of Congress as the "Langdon crowd," which crowd was admitted to be somewhat a factor when it finally prevailed on the President to take over 11,000 postmasters from the appointment class and put them under the control of the Civil Service Commission, resulting in the necessity of a competitive examination for these postmasters instead of their securing positions through political favoritism.

Those who did not know Langdon intimately suggested that "this fellow ought to be 'taken care of.' What in God's name does he want? A committee chairmanship? An ambassadorship for some Mississippi charcoal burner? A couple of Federal judgeships for his friends? Well, whatever it is, give it to him and get him in with the rest of us!"

Again it was Peabody who had the deciding say.

"There's only one thing worse than a young reformer, and that's an old one," he laughed bitterly

at a secret conclave at his apartment in the luxurious Louis Napoleon Hotel. "The young one thinks he is going to live and wants our future profits for himself. The old one thinks he's going to die, and he's sore at leaving so much graft behind him."

Heads and hearts thinking and throbbing together, Langdon and his secretary had learned to lean on each other, the young gaining inspiration from the old, the old gaining strength from the young. They loved each other, and, more than any love, they trusted one another. And Hope Georgia watched it all and rejoiced, for she believed with all the accrued erudition of eighteen years of innocent girlhood that Mr. Bud Haines was quite the finest specimen of young manhood this world had ever produced. How could he have happened? She was sure that she had never met his equal, not even in that memorable week she had spent in Jackson.

The passing weeks taught Haines that he was deeply in love with Carolina, and, though he had endeavored to keep the knowledge of this from her, her woman's intuition had told her his secret, and she stifled the momentary regrets that flitted into her mind, because she was now in "the game" herself, the Washington game, that ensnares the woman as well as the man and makes her a slave to its fancy. No one but herself and Norton knew how deeply she had "plunged" on a certain possible turn of the political cards. She must not, she could not, lose if life itself were to remain of value to her, and on her sway over this secretary she was told it all depended.

A subject that for some unexplained reason frequently lodged in Haines' mind was that of the apparent assiduity with which Mrs. Spangler culti-

vated Senator Langdon's friendship. For several years she had occupied a high social position at the capital, he well knew, but various indefinite, intangible rumors he had heard, he could not state exactly where, had made him regret her growing intimacy with the girls and with the Senator. They had met her through letters of introduction of the most trustworthy and assuring character from people of highest social rank in Virginia, where the Langdons had many friends; but even so, Haines realized, people who write introductory letters are sometimes thoughtless in considering all the circumstances of the parties they introduce, and residents of Virginia who had not been in the capital for years might be forgiven for not knowing of all the more recent developments in the lives of those they knew in Washington. While not wishing to have the Senator know of his intention, the secretary determined to investigate Mrs. Spangler and her present mode of life at his first opportunity, hoping the while that his quest would reveal her to be what the Langdons considered her—a widow of wealth, fashion and reserve who resided at the capital because the memories of her late husband, a former Congressman of high standing, were associated with it.

Calling at the Langdons' house one evening in February to receive directions regarding important work for the next day, Haines was somewhat puzzled at the peculiar smile on the Senator's face. Answering the secretary's look of inquiry, the Mississippian said:

"I've been told that I can name the new holder of a five-thousand-dollar-a-year position in the Department of Commerce and Labor, and that if I

have no one in particular from my State to name—that—that you would be a good man for the job. First I was glad for your sake, my boy, for if you wanted it you could have the position. But on thinking it over it seemed there might be something behind it not showing on the surface."

"It's a trick," said Haines. "Who made the offer?"

"Senator Stevens."

"I might have known," hotly responded the secretary. "There's a crowd that wants you and me separated. Thought this bait too much for me to resist, did they?" Then he paused, rubbing his fingers through his hair in a perplexed manner. "Strange, isn't it, Senator, that a man of your party is offered this desirable piece of patronage, entirely unsolicited on your part, from the administration of another, a different political party? Especially when that other party has so many hungry would-be 'tax eaters' clamoring to enter the 'land of milk and honey.' I think Stevens deliberately——"

"There, there, Bud," broke in Langdon, "you mustn't say anything against Senator Stevens to me. True, he associates with some folks I don't approve of, but that doesn't necessarily mean anything wrong, and I myself have always found him thoroughly honest."

"Yes," muttered the secretary, following the Senator into the library, "you've always found him honest because you think everybody's honest—but Stevens is just the doctor who will cure you of this ailment—this chronic trustfulness."

Haines laughed softly. "When Peabody's little Stevie gets through hacking at the prostrate body

of political purity his two-handed sword of political corruption will need new edges."

Thus far neither the Senator nor his secretary had suspicion of any questionable deal in regard to the gulf naval base. The rush of other events, particularly the fight over the reduction of the tariff, had pushed this project temporarily into the background so far as they were concerned, though the "boss of the Senate" and his satellites had been losing no time in perfecting their plans regarding the choice of Altacoola as the site.

Peabody and Stevens had ingeniously exploited Langdon at every possible opportunity in relation to the naval base. Asked about new developments in the committee on naval affairs, the ready answer was: "Better see Senator Langdon. He knows all about the naval base; has the matter in full charge. I really know little about it."

So, by hiding behind the unsuspecting old hero of Crawfordsville, they diverted from themselves any possible suspicion and placed Langdon where he would have to bear the brunt of the great scandal that would, they well knew, come out at some future time—after their foul conspiracy against the nation had been consummated, after the fruits of their betrayal had been secured.

What, after all, the schemers concluded, is the little matter of an investigation among Senators to guilty Senators who, deeply versed in the law, have destroyed every compromising document that could be admissible as evidence?

Why, the Senate would appoint an investigating committee and investigate itself, would it not, when the ridiculous scandal came?

And what Senator would fear himself, or for himself, as he investigated himself, when the blame had

already been put publicly on some one else, some simple-minded old soul who could go back to his cotton fields in Mississippi and forget all about it, strong in his innocence, even though shorn of reputation, and desire to live?

CHAPTER X

WHEN SENATORS DISAGREE

THE wiseacres of Washington had nightly predicted that the site of the hundred-million-dollar gulf naval base would be decided on in March, after the excitement and gayety attending the presidential inauguration had subsided.

On the morning of the day before this action of the committee on naval affairs was to be taken Secretary Haines sat at his desk in Senator Langdon's committee room in the Capitol. Richard Cullen, the favorite associate of Haines in his journalistic days, out earlier than usual on his daily round of the departments for news for his Chicago paper, had strolled in and attempted a few of his characteristic cynicisms. Haines usually found them entertaining, but these were directed at Senator Langdon.

"Now, let me tell you something, Dick," the secretary answered, firmly. "Don't you work off all your dyspeptic ideas in this neighborhood. My Senator is a great man. They can't appreciate him up here because he's honest—crystal clear. I used to think I knew what a decent citizen, a real man, ought to be, but he's taught me some new things. He'll teach them all something before he gets through."

Cullen hung one leg over Haines' desk.

"You're a nice, quiet, gentlemanly little optimist,

and I like you, old fellow," retorted Cullen. "But don't deceive yourself too much. Your Senator Langdon is personally one of the best ever. But he was born a mark, and a mark he'll be to the end of time.

"He looks good now. Sure, I like his speeches, and all that, but just wait. When some of those old foxes in the Senate want to put his head in the bag and tie it down, they won't have any trouble at all."

Smiling, Haines looked up at his cynical friend.

"The bag'll have to go over my head, too," he said, with a nod.

"Well, I don't know that Peabody'd have to strain himself very much to get such an awful big bag to drop you both in, if it comes right down to that, old chap. You're making a mistake. You're as bad as your old man. You're a beautiful pair of optimists, and you a good newspaper man, too—it's a shame!"

After momentary hesitation, Cullen continued, thoroughly serious.

"But, my old friend," he said in low tone, glancing quickly about, "there's one thing that you've got to put a stop to. It's hurting you."

The secretary's face showed his bewilderment.

"What do you mean?" he snapped, abruptly. "Out with it!"

"I mean," replied Cullen, "that rumors are going around that you are keeping Langdon away from the crowd of 'insiders' in the Senate for your own purposes—that, in short, you plan to——"

"I understand," was the quick interruption. "I am accused of wanting to 'deliver' Senator Langdon, guarantee his vote, on some graft proposition, so that I can get the money and not he himself.

Consequently I'm tipping him off on what measures are honest, so that he'll vote for them, until—until I'm offered my price, then influence him to vote for some big crooked scheme, telling him it is all right. He votes as I suggest, and I get the money!"

"That's what 'delivering a man' means in Washington," dryly answered the Chicago correspondent. "It means winning a man's confidence, his support, his vote, through friendship, and then selling it for cash——"

"But you, Dick, you have——"

"Of course, old man, I have denied the truth of this. I knew you too well to doubt you. Still, the yarn is hurting you. Remember that Western Senator who was 'delivered' twice, both ways, on a graft bill?" he laughingly asked the secretary.

"Should say I did, Dick. That is the record for that game. It was a corporation measure. One railroad wanted it; another opposed it. The Senator innocently told an Eastern Senator that he was going to vote for the bill. Then the Easterner went to the railroad wanting the bill passed and got $7,000 on his absolute promise that he would get Senator X. to vote for it, who, of course, did vote for it."

"Yes," said Cullen, "and later, when Senator X. heard that Senator Z. had got money for his vote, he was wild. Then when another effort was made to pass the bill (which had been defeated) the 'delivered' Senator said to Z. as he met him unexpectedly: 'You scoundrel, here's where I get square with you to some extent. Anyway, I'm going to vote against that bill this time and make a long speech against it, too.' Senator Z. then hustled to the lobbyist of the railroad that wanted the bill

killed and guaranteed him that for $10,000 he could get Senator X. to change his vote, to vote against the bill."

"And he got the money, too, both ways," added Haines, as Cullen concluded, "and both railroads to this day think that X. received the money from Z."

"Of course," said Cullen, "but X. was to blame, though. He didn't know enough to keep to himself how he was going to vote. Any man that talks that way will be 'delivered.' "

"I know how to stop those rumors, for I'm sure it's Peabody's work, he thinking Langdon will hear the talk and mistrust me," began Haines, when in came Senator Langdon himself, his face beaming contentedly. Little did the junior Senator from Mississippi realize that he was soon to face the severest trial, the most vital crisis, of his entire life.

Cullen responded to the Senator's cheery greeting of "Mornin', everybody!"

"Senator," he asked, "my paper wants your opinion on the question of the election of Senators by popular vote. Do you think the system of electing Senators by vote of State Legislatures should be abolished?"

The Mississippian cocked his head to one side.

"I reckon that's a question that concerns future Senators, and not those already elected," he chuckled.

Haines laughed at Cullen, who thrust his pad into his pocket and hurried away.

"It is to-day that I appear before the ways and means committee, isn't it?" Langdon queried of his secretary.

"Yes," said Haines, consulting his memorandum book. "At 11 o'clock you go before ways and means

to put forward the needs of your State on the matter of the reduction of the tariff on aluminium hydrates. The people of Mississippi believe it has actually put back life into the exhausted cotton lands. In Virginia they hope to use it on the tobacco fields."

"Where does the pesky stuff come from?" asked the Senator.

"From South America," coached the secretary. "The South is in a hurry for it, so the duty must come down. You'll have to bluff a bit, because Peabody and his crowd will try to make a kind of bargain—wanting you to keep up iron and steel duties. But you don't believe that iron and steel need help, you will tell them, don't you see, so that they will feel the necessity of giving you what you want for the South in order to gain your support for the iron and steel demands."

The office door opened and Senator Peabody appeared.

"Peabody," whispered the secretary.

Instantly the Mississippian had his cue. His back to Peabody, he rose, brought down his fist heavily upon the desk, and expounded oratorically to Haines:

"What we can produce of aluminium hydrates, my boy, is problematical, but the South is in a hurry for it, and the duty must come down. It's got to come down, and I'm not going to do anything else until it does."

The secretary stretched across the desk.

"Excuse me, Senator; Senator Peabody is here," he said, loudly and surprisedly, as though he had just sighted the boss of the Senate.

The Mississippian turned.

"Oh, good-morning, Senator. I was just talking with my secretary about that hydrate clause."

Peabody bowed slightly.

"Yes, I knew it was coming up," he said, "so I just dropped over. I'm not opposed to it or any Southern measure; but it makes it more difficult for me when you Southern people oppose certain Pittsburg interests that I have to take care of."

Langdon smiled.

"I've never been in Pittsburg, but they tell me it looks as if it could take care of itself."

The visitor shrugged his shoulders.

"That's true enough; but give and take is the rule in political matters, Langdon."

This remark brought a frown to Langdon's face.

"I don't like bargaining between gentlemen, Peabody. More important still, I don't believe American politics has to be run on that plan. Why can't we change a lot of things now that we are here?"

Langdon became so enthused that he paced up and down the room as he spoke.

"Peabody, you and Stevens and I," continued Langdon, "could get our friends together and right now start to make this great capital of our great country the place of the 'square deal,' the place where give and take, bargain and sale, are unknown. We could start a movement that would drive out all secret influences——"

The secretary noticed Peabody's involuntary start.

"The newspapers would help us," went on Langdon. "Public opinion would be with us, and both houses of Congress would have to join in the work if we went out in front, led the way and showed them their plain duty. And I tell you, Senator Peabody, that the principles that gave birth to this

country, the principles of truth, honesty, justice and independence, would rule in Washington——"

"If Washington cared anything about them, Langdon," interjected the Pennsylvanian.

"That's my point," cried the Mississippian—"let us teach Washington to care about them!"

"Langdon, Langdon," said Peabody, patronizingly, "you've seized on a bigger task than you know. After you reform Washington you will have to go on and reform human nature, human instincts, every human being in the country, if you want to make politics this angelic thing you describe. It isn't politics, it's humanity, that's wrong," waving aside a protest from Langdon.

"Anyway, your idea is not constitutional, Langdon," continued Peabody. "You want everybody to have a share in the national government. That wouldn't meet the theory of centralization woven into our political system by its founders. They intended that our Government should be controlled by a limited number of representatives, so that authority can be fixed and responsibility ascertained."

"You distort my meaning!" cried Langdon. "And, Senator, I would like to ask why so many high-priced constitutional lawyers who enter Congress spend so much time in placing the Constitution of the United States between themselves and their duty, sir, between the people and their Government, sir, between the nation and its destiny? I want to know if in your opinion the Constitution was designed to throttle expression of the public will?"

"Of course not. That's the reason you and I, Langdon, and the others are elected to the Senate," added Peabody, starting to leave. Then he halted. "By the way, Senator," he said, "I'll do my best to

arrange what you want regarding aluminium hydrates for the sake of the South, and I'll also stand with you for Altacoola for the naval base. Our committee is to make its report to-morrow."

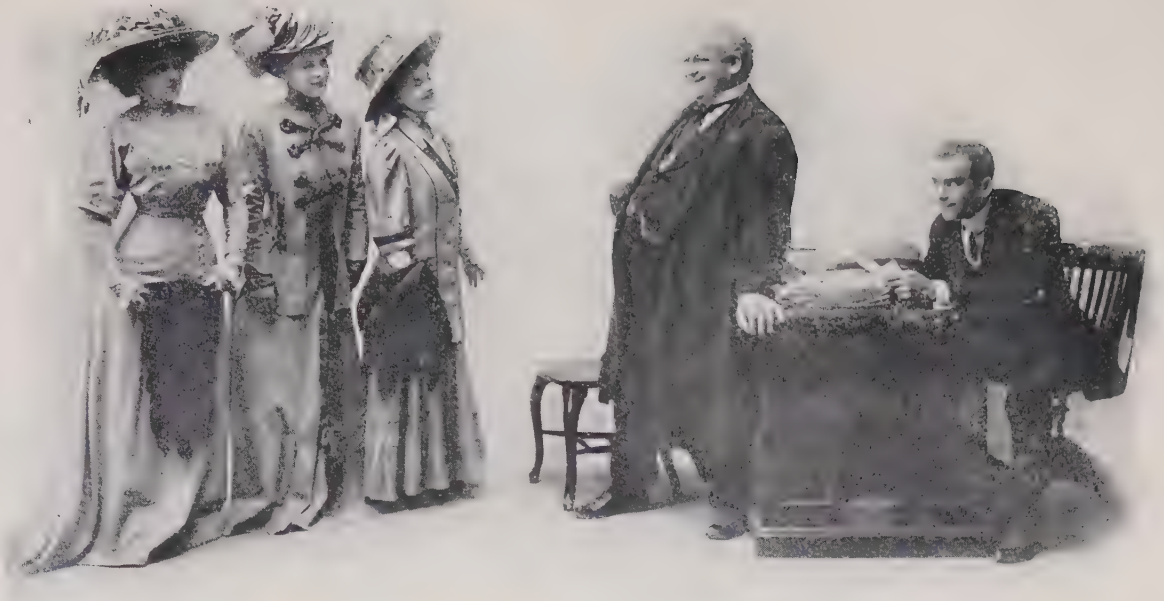
Langdon observed the penetrating gaze that Peabody had fixed on him. It seemed to betray that the Pennsylvanian's apparently careless manner was assumed.

"H'm!" coughed Langdon, glancing at Haines. "I'm not absolutely committed to Altacoola until I'm sure it's the best place. I'll make up my mind to-day definitely, and I *think* it will be for Altacoola."

The boss of the Senate went out, glaring venomously at Haines, slamming the door.

A moment later a page boy brought in a card. "Colonel J. D. Telfer, Gulf City," read the Senator.

"Bud," he remarked to the secretary, "I'm going to send my old acquaintance, Telfer, Mayor of Gulf City, in here for you to talk to. He'll want to know about his town's chances for being chosen as the naval base. I must hurry away, as I have an appointment with my daughters and Mrs. Spangler before going before ways and means."



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CHAPTER XI

ON THE TRAIL OF THE "INSIDERS"

Colonel J. D. Telfer (J .D. standing for Jefferson Davis, he explained proudly to Haines) proved a warm advocate of the doubtful merits of Gulf City as a hundred-million-dollar naval base. His flushed face grew redder, his long white hair became disordered, and he tugged at his white mustache continually as he waxed warmer in his efforts to impress the Senator's secretary.

"I tell you, Mr. Haines, Gulf City, sah, leads all the South when it comes to choosin' ground fo' a naval base. Her vast expanse of crystal sea, her miles upon miles of silvah sands, sah, protected by a natural harbor and th' islands of Mississippi Sound, make her th' only spot to be considered. She's God's own choice and the people's, too, for a naval base."

"But, unfortunately, Congress also has something to say about choosing it," spoke Haines.

"To be shuah they do," said Gulf City's Mayor, "but——"

"And there was a man here from Altacoola yesterday," again interrupted the secretary, "who said that Gulf City was fit only to be the State refuge for aged and indigent frogs."

"Say, they ain't a man in Altacoola wot can speak th' truth," indignantly shrieked the old Colonel, almost losing control of himself; "because

their heads is always a-buzzin' and a-hummin' from th' quinine they have to take to keep th' fever away, sah!"

The Mayor sat directly in front of Haines, at the opposite side of his desk. Regaining his composure, he suddenly leaned forward and half whispered to the secretary:

"Mah young friend, don't let Senator Langdon get switched away from Gulf City by them cheap skates from Altacoola. Now, if you'll get th' Senator to vote fo' Gulf City we'll see—I'll see, sah, as an officer of th' Gulf City Lan' Company—that you get taken ca-ah of."

Haines' eyes opened wide.

"Go on, Colonel; go on with your offer," he said.

"Well, I'll see that a block of stock, sah—a big block—is set aside fo' Senator Langdon an' another fo' you, too. We've made this ah-rangement elsewheah. We'll outbid Altacoola everah time. They're po' sports an' hate to give up."

"So Altacoola is bidding, too?" excitedly asked Haines.

"Why, of co'se it is. Ah yo' as blind as that o' ah yo' foolin' with me?" questioned Telfer, suspiciously. "Seems to me yo' ought to know more about that end of it than a fellah clear from th' gulf."

"Certainly, certainly," mumbled Haines, impatiently, as he endeavored to associate coherently, intelligently, in his mind these startling new revelations of Telfer with certain incidents he had previously noted in the operations of the committee on naval affairs.

Then he looked across at the Mayor and smiled. Apparently he had heard nothing to amaze him.

"Colonel," he returned calmly, dropping into a

voice that sounded of pity for the gray hairs of the lobbyist, "about fifty men a day come to me with propositions like that. There is nothing doing, Colonel. I couldn't possibly interest Senator Langdon, because he has the faculty of judging for himself, and he would be prejudiced against either town that came out with such a proposition."

"Lan' speculation is legitimate," protested the Colonel, cunningly.

Haines agreed.

"Certainly—by outsiders. But it's d—d thievery when engaged in by any one connected with putting a bill through. If I were to tell Senator Langdon what you have told me it would decide him unalterably in favor of Altacoola. Senator Langdon, sir, is one of the few men in Washington who would rather be thought a fool than a grafter if it came down to that."

The Mayor of Gulf City jumped to his feet, his face blazing in rage, not in shame.

"Seems to me yo're mighty fresh, young man," he blustered. "What kind of politics is Langdon playin'?"

"Not fresh, Colonel; only friendly. I'm just tipping you off how not to be a friend to Altacoola. As to his politics, the Senator will answer you himself."

A scornful laugh accompanied Telfer's reply.

"Altacoola, huh! I reckon yo' must be a fool, after all. Why, everybody knows of the speculatin' in land around Altacoola, and everybody knows it ain't outsiders that's doin' it. It's the insiders, right here in Washington. If yo' ain't in, yo' can easy get a latchkey. Young man, yo'll find out things some day, and yo'll drop to it all.

"I guess I was too late with yo'. That's about

the size of it. I guess Altacoola'll talk to yo'," went on the Mayor. "If that feller Fairbrother of Altacoola had been able to hold his tongue maybe I wouldn't know so much. But now I know what's what. I know this—that yo're either a big fool or —an insider. Yo're a nice young feller. I have kind-a taken a fancy to yo'. I like to see yo' young fellers get along and not miss yo'r chances. Come, my boy, get wise to yo'rself, get wise to yo'rself! Climb on to the band wagon with yo' friends."

Bud concluded that he might be able to get more definite information out of Telfer if he humored him a bit.

"I tell you, Colonel," he finally said, "these are pretty grave charges you're making, but I'll tell you confidentially, owing to your liking for me, that it is not yet too late to do something for Gulf City. Now, just suppose you and I dine together to-night early, and we'll go over the whole ground to see how things lie. Will you?"

The Colonel held out his hand, smiling broadly. He felt that at last he had won the secretary over; that the young man was at heart anxious to take money for his influence with the Senator.

"All right, my boy, yo're on. We'll dine together. Yo' are absolutely certain that it won't be too late to get to Senator Langdon?"

"Absolutely positive. I wouldn't make a mistake in a matter like this, would I, unless I was what you said I was—a fool?"

"Of course not. Oh, yo're a slick one. I like to do business with folks like yo'. It's mighty educatin'!"

"Thanks," answered Bud, dryly. "It's certain that Langdon won't decide which place he's for un-

til to-morrow. I promise you that he won't decide until after I have my talk with you."

"Yo' see," said Telfer, "I asked that question because, as yo' probably know, Congressman Norton and his crowd is pretty close to Senator Langdon——"

Haines cut him short with a gasp of surprise.

"Norton!"

Telfer, wrinkling his forehead incredulously, looked at Haines. "Surest thing you know, my boy."

Bud turned his head away in thought.

"Oh, leave the Norton outfit to me. I'll fool them," he finally said.

"Good."

Telfer shook the secretary's hand heartily.

"Yo're no fool, my boy. Anybody can see that—after they get to know yo' all. That's what comes of bein' one of them smooth New Yorkers. They 'pear mighty sanctimonious on th' outside, but on th' inside they're the real goods, all right."

The lobbyist hurried away, his bibulous soul swelling with satisfaction. He was sure of triumphing over Altacoola, and he was willing to pay the price.

Haines sank back into his chair. "I wonder what Washington 'insiders,'" he murmured, "are speculating in Altacoola land. Telfer mentions Norton's name. I wonder——"

The door opened, and before him stood Carolina Langdon.

"Ah, Miss Langdon," he exclaimed, "I am glad to see you!"

She walked to him and extended cordially a slender gloved hand.

"This is a real pleasure, Mr. Haines," she began.

"I've been waiting to talk to you for some time. It's about something important."

"Something important," smiled Haines. "You want to see me about something important? Well, let me tell you a secret. Every time I see you it is an important occasion to me."

Carolina Langdon had never appeared more charming, more beautiful to young Haines than she did that day. Perhaps she appeared more inspiring because of the contrast her presence afforded to the unpleasant episodes through which he had just passed; also, Carolina was dressed in her most becoming street gown, which she well realized, as she was enacting a carefully planned part with the unfortunate secretary.

His frankness and the sincere admiration that shone in his eyes caused her to falter momentarily, almost made her weaken in her purpose, but she made an effort and secured a firmer grip on herself, for she must play a rôle that would crush to earth the air castles this young secretary was building, a rôle that would crush the ideals of this young optimist as well.

CHAPTER XII

THE CURE OF A WOMAN'S LOVE

Carolina had come to find out from Haines, if possible, how her father was going to vote on the naval base and to induce the secretary to persuade him to stand for Altacoola—if there seemed danger that he would vote for another site. That was her scheme, for Carolina had put $25,000 into Altacoola land—money left by her mother. Norton had persuaded Carolina to invest in the enterprise to defraud the Government, promising her $50,000 clear profit. How much she could do in Washington society with that!

The continued uncertainty over her father's final attitude had strained her nerves almost to the breaking, for the success of the conspiracy depended on his vote. Not even the words of Norton, her future husband, could reassure her. Her worry was increased by the knowledge of Randolph's investment of her father's $50,000.

That Carolina must sacrifice Haines on the altar of her consuming desire for money, for a higher worldly position, was an unimportant consideration. He stood in the way. Any moment he might discover the existence of the Altacoola scheme, he would immediately tell her father, and she knew her father would immediately decide against Altacoola—the bright hopes of her future would turn to ashes. Norton's money as well was invested in

Altacoola. He, too, would be ruined. She was sure that she loved Norton, but she could not marry a penniless man.

Carolina resumed the conversation.

"It isn't anything so very important, Mr. Haines. It's about father."

Haines beamed.

"I have the honor to report, Miss Langdon," he bowed, "that your father is making the very best kind of a Senator."

The girl hesitated.

"Yes; he might, if he had some ambition."

"Don't worry! If it comes down to that, I have ambition for two. You want him to be a success, don't you? Well, he is the biggest kind of a success."

"I never believed that he would be," confessed the daughter.

Haines laughed.

"Why, do you realize that to-day he is one of the most popular men in public life throughout the country; that 'What does Langdon think?' has become the watchword of the big body of independents who want honesty and decent government without graft?

"I tell you that's a big thing, Miss Langdon. That's success—real success in politics, especially in Washington politics.

"Now, if there's anything else you want him to have, I'll see that he gets it. I'll try to get it for him"—he paused a minute, then added, with heartfelt meaning in his voice—"and for you, Miss Langdon."

Carolina played coquettishly with the secretary.

"For me, Mr. Haines?" she questioned, archly, with an effective glance into his eyes.

Bud's pulses began to throb violently—to leap.

"Yes," he exclaimed, unsteadily, "for you, and you know it. That's the inspiration now, my inspiration—the chance of winning your belief in me, of winning something more, the biggest thing I ever thought to win—because, Miss Langdon—Carolina—I love you." He bent over and seized the girl's hand. "Ever since the day I first saw you I——"

She shook her head indulgently and in a moment drew her hand from his.

"You mustn't be so serious, Mr. Haines. You don't understand Southern girls at all. We are not just like Northern girls. We are used to being made love to from the time we are knee-high. Sometimes, I fear, we flirt a little, but we don't mean any harm. All girls flirt—a little."

"But somebody wins even the Southern girls," declared Haines, eagerly.

The girl's face became serious, earnest, sincere.

"Yes, somebody does, always," she said. "And when a Southern girl is won she stays won, Mr. Haines."

"And I have a chance to win?" questioned the determined young Northerner.

Carolina smiled sweetly and expressively.

"Who knows? First make my father even a bigger success—that's first. Oh, I wonder if you can realize what all this life means to me! If you can realize what those years of stagnating on the plantation meant to me! No man would have endured it!" she exclaimed bitterly. "I am more of a man than a woman in some ways; I'm ambitious. From the time I was a little girl I've wanted the world, power, fame, money. I want them still. I mean to get them somehow, anyhow. If I can't get them myself, some one must get them for me."

"And love?" suggested the man. "You are leaving love out. Suppose I get all these things for you?"

Bud's pounding heart almost stopped. He could scarcely gain his breath as he saw creep into Carolina's eyes what he believed to be the light of hope for him, the light even of a woman's promise.

"Who knows, Mr. Haines? There's no reward guaranteed. There may be others trying," she answered.

Haines laughed—the strong, hopeful, fighting laugh of the man who would combat the boss of the Senate on ground of the boss' own choosing.

"All right!" he cried. "If it's an open fight I'll enlist. I'll give them all a run. What are your orders?"

Carolina appeared indifferent.

"I don't know that I have any particular orders, sir knight, except to see that my father does all he can for the Altacoola naval base."

Haines paused, seized by a sudden tremor.

"The Altacoola naval base?" he stammered. "Well, all I can say is that the Senator will do what he thinks right. That might bring power and fame—a right decision in this case—but it can't bring money."

Carolina shrugged her shoulders.

"Money?" She laughed with affected carelessness. "Well, we'll have to let the money take care of itself for a time. But I do want him to vote for Altacoola, because I believe that will be the best for him. You believe in Altacoola, don't you?"

Haines hesitated, then answered:

"Well, between the two sites merely as sites Altacoola seems to me rather better."

Miss Langdon held out her hand impulsively.

"Then it will be Altacoola!" she cried. "Thank you, Mr. Haines. We are partners, then, for Altacoola."

The young man grasped her hand earnestly.

"I'd like to be your partner for good, Carolina!" he cried.

They stood there close together, holding each other's hands, looking into each other's eyes, when the door opened and in came Charles Norton.

CHAPTER XIII

AN OLD-FASHIONED FATHER

Congressman Norton was startled at the sight of Carolina and Haines apparently so wrapped up in each other. Perhaps she was getting interested in the handsome, interfering secretary. That a woman sometimes breaks her promise to wed he well knew. Plainly Carolina was carrying things too far for a girl who was the promised wife of another.

Carolina and Haines showed surprise at Norton's entrance.

The Congressman advanced and spoke sneeringly, his demeanor marking him to be in a dangerous mood.

"Do I intrude?" he drawled, deliberately.

Carolina drew away her hands from Haines and faced the newcomer.

"Intrude!" she exclaimed, contemptuously, in a tone that Norton construed as in his favor and Haines in his own.

"Intrude!" Haines laughed, sarcastically, feeling that now he was leader in the race for love against this Mississippi representative, who was, he knew, a subservient tool and a taker of bribes. "You surely do intrude, Norton. Wouldn't any man who had interrupted a tête-á-tête another man was having with Miss Langdon be intruding?"

"I suppose I can't deny that," he replied.

The secretary smiled again.

"I'll match you to see who stays," he said.

But Norton's turn to defeat his rival had come. He held out a paper to Haines.

"Senator Langdon gave me this for you. I reckon I don't have to match."

The secretary opened the note to read:

"Where in thunder does that hydrate come from —South America or Russia? How much off on the tariff on the creature do we want? Come over to the committee room, where I am, right away. Say it's an urgent message and get in with a tip."

The secretary looked up, with a laugh.

"You win, Norton. I'm off. Good-by." And he started on a run to the Senator's aid.

Norton turned angrily on the girl as the door closed.

"See here, Carolina," he cried, "what do you mean by letting that fellow make love to you?"

Carolina Langdon would not permit rebuke, even from the man she cared for. She tossed back her head and said, coolly:

"Why shouldn't I let him make love to me if I choose?"

"You know why," exclaimed Norton, his dark face flushing sullenly. "Because I love you and you love me!" And he seized her and pressed her to him. "That is why!" he cried, and he kissed her again and again.

"Yes, I love you, Charlie; you know that," Carolina said, simply. She was conquered by the Southerner's masterfulness.

"Then why do you stand for that whippersnapper's talk?" asked Norton, perplexedly.

Carolina laughed.

"Don't you see, Charlie, I have to stand for it? I have to stand for it for your sake, for Randolph's sake, for my own sake, for all our sakes. You know the influence he has over father.

"He can make father do anything he wants, and suppose I don't lead him on? Where's our project? Let him suspect a thing and let him go to father, and you know what will happen. Father would turn against that Altacoola scheme in a moment. He'd beggar himself, if it were necessary, rather than let a single one of us make a dollar out of a thing he had to decide."

"You're right, I reckon, Carolina," said Norton, dejectedly. "Your father is a real type of the Southern gentleman. He hasn't seen any real money in so long he can't even bear to think of it. Somebody's got to make money out of this, and we should be the ones."

"We'd lose frightfully, Charlie, if they changed to Gulf City, wouldn't we?" said the girl, apprehensively. "I'm horribly afraid sometimes, Charlie. That's why I came here to-day. I wanted to influence Haines, to keep him straight. Is there any danger that they'll change? You don't think there is, do you?"

"Of course not, child. Stevens has got his money in, and Peabody. There are only five on the committee. It's bound to go through."

"Then why is father so important to them?" asked Carolina.

"It's past my understanding, Carolina. I don't see how he's done it, but the whole country has come to believe whatever your father does is right, and they've got to have him."

"And father is completely under the domination

of this secretary," murmured the girl, thoughtfully.

Norton nodded.

"We've got to get rid of him, Carolina. That's all there is to it. He has to go! When it comes to bossing the Senator and making love to you, too, he's getting too strong."

"How can you do it?" she asked. "You know when father likes any one he won't believe a thing against him."

Norton agreed, sorrowfully.

"That's right. Seems like the Senator's coming to think more of this fellow than he does of his own family. Why, I wouldn't be surprised if he'd even let one of you girls marry him if he wanted to marry you."

"We'd have something to say about that," Carolina laughed, amusedly. "Do you think that Hope or I could ever care for a man like this fellow? Of course not. This Altacoola business must go through right. It would be too cruel not to have it so. And then——"

"And then you and I'll be married at once, Carolina, whether your father likes it or not," ended Norton for her. "With Altacoola safe, we can do as we please, as between us we'll be rich. What does it matter how we get the money, as long as we get it?"

CHAPTER XIV

WHEN A DAUGHTER BETRAYS HER FATHER

Bud returned to find Miss Langdon and Norton still in the room. New buoyancy, new courage, thrilled in his veins. He would give this Congressman the battle of his life for this prize, of that he was confident.

"I have an engagement with Mrs. Holcomb, Senator Holcomb's wife," she said, "so I must hurry away, but I expect to be back to see father."

"I think I'll just wait," suggested Norton. "I have to see the Senator as soon as possible, and he ought to return from that ways and means committee meeting pretty soon."

When Carolina had gone a slight feeling of constraint settled over the two.

"The Senator's pretty busy these days with his naval base matter coming up, isn't he?"

"Yes; keeps him pretty busy receiving delegations from Altacoola and Gulf City and patting them both on the back," said Haines. "Had a man from Gulf City in this morning with some pretty strong arguments."

The secretary watched Norton keenly to note the effect of this hint in favor of Gulf City.

"Gulf City!" Norton sneered. "Shucks! Who'd put a naval base on a bunch of mud flats? I reckon those Gulf City fellows are wasting their time."

"Think so?" suggested Haines. "Are you absolutely sure?"

Norton started.

"Why, you don't mean to tell me," he exclaimed, "that Senator Langdon would vote for Gulf City for the naval base?"

"I don't mean to tell you anything, Congressman," was the cool rejoinder. "It's not my business. The Senator's the one who does the talking."

An ugly sneer wrinkled the Congressman's face.

"Well, I'm glad he attends to his own business and doesn't trust too many people," he said pointedly.

The secretary smiled in puzzling fashion.

"That's exactly why I don't talk, Congressman," he said pleasantly. "The Senator doesn't trust too many people. If he did, there might be too much money made out of land speculation. Senator Langdon dosen't happen to be one of those Senators who care for that kind of thing."

"I suppose you think you're pretty strong with the Senator," ventured the Mississippian.

"Tell you the truth, I haven't thought very much about it," replied Haines, "but, if you come right down to it, I guess I am pretty strong."

"Suppose you've influenced him in the naval base business, then."

Still the secretary smiled, keeping his temper under the adroit attack.

"Well, I think he'd listen to me with considerable interest."

"But you're for Altacoola, of course."

Haines shook his head.

"No, I can't say that I'm for Altacoola. Fellow who was in here this morning put up a pretty good argument, to my mind, for Gulf City. In fact,

he made it pretty strong. Seemed to show it was all to my interest to go in with Gulf City. Think I'll have to investigate a little more. I tell you, Norton," spoke Haines in a confidential manner, "this land speculation fever is a frightful thing. While I was talking to this fellow from Gulf City I almost caught it myself. Probably if I met the head of the Altacoola speculation I might catch the fever from him too."

"Why don't you put your money into Gulf City and lose it, then?" replied Norton, nodding his head scornfully. "That'd be a good lesson for a rising young politician like you."

Senator Langdon's secretary peered straight into Norton's eyes.

"Because, Congressman," he said, "if I were to put my money in Gulf City perhaps I wouldn't lose it."

The Southerner took a step forward, leaned over and glared angrily at Haines. His face whitened.

"You don't mean that you could swing Langdon into Gulf City?" he gasped.

Haines smiled.

"I can't say that, Norton, but I guess people interested in Altacoola would hate to have me try."

"I didn't know you were that kind, Haines," said Norton, his virtue aroused at the thought of losing his money. "So you're playing the game like all the rest?"

"Why shouldn't I?" shrugged the secretary. "I guess perhaps I'm a little sore because the Altacoola people haven't even paid me the compliment of thinking I had any influence, so they can't expect me to work for them. The Gulf City people have. As things stand, Gulf City looks pretty good to me."

"Is this straight talk?" exclaimed Norton.

"Take it or leave it," retorted Bud.

The Mississippian leaned with his hands on the desk.

"Well, Haines, if you're like the rest and are really interested in Altacoola, I don't know that you'd have to go very far to talk."

"You know something of Altacoola lands, then, Norton?" said Robert, tingling with suppressed excitement. He felt that he was getting close to real facts in a colossal "deal."

Norton was sure of his man now.

"Well, I am in touch with some people who've got lands and options on more. I might fix it for you to come in," he whispered.

Haines shook his head.

"You know I haven't much money, Norton. All I could put in would be my influence. Who are these people? Are they cheap little local folks or are they real people here who have some power and can do something that is worth while?"

"Do I look like I'd fool with cheap skates, Haines? They're the real people. I think, Haines, that either Senator Stevens or Senator Peabody would advise you that you are safe."

"Ah! Then Stevens and Peabody are the ones. They'll make it Altacoola, then sell to the Government at a big advance and move to 'Easy Street.'"

"That's right," agreed Norton.

Bud Haines straightened abruptly. The expression on his face gave Norton a sudden chill—made him tremble.

"Now I've got you," cried the secretary. "You've given yourself dead away. I've known all along you're a d—d thief, Norton, and you've just proved it to me yourself."

"What do you mean?" Norton was clenching his fist. "Words like that mean fight to a Southerner!"

"I mean that before Senator Langdon goes one step further in this matter he shall know that his colleagues and you are thieves, Mr. Norton, trying to use him for a cat's-paw to steal for them from the Government. I suspected something this morning when Gulf City tried to bribe me and a visitor from there gave me what turns out to be a pretty good tip."

"So that was your dirty trick," exclaimed the Congressman as he regained his composure.

"Set a make-believe thief to catch a real one," laughed the secretary. "Very good trick, I think."

"I'll make you pay for that!" cried Norton, shaking his fist.

"All right. Send in your bill any old time," laughed Haines. "The sooner the better. Meantime I'm going to talk to Langdon."

He had started for the door when Carolina Langdon re-entered, followed by her brother Randolph.

"Wait a minute," said Norton, with unexpected quietness. "I wouldn't do what you're about to do, Mr. Haines."

"Of course you wouldn't," sneered Haines.

"I mean that you will be making a mistake, Haines, to tell the Senator what you have learned," rejoined the Southerner, struggling to keep calm at this critical moment when all was at stake. He realized, further, that now was the time to put Haines out of the way—if that were possible. "A mistake, Mr. Haines," he continued, "because, you see, you don't know as much as you think. I wouldn't talk to Langdon if I were you. It will only embarrass him and do no good, because Lang-

don's money is in this scheme, too, and Langdon's in the same boat with the rest of us."

Haines stopped short at this astounding charge against his chief.

"Norton, you lie! I'll believe it of Langdon when he tells me so; not otherwise."

Norton turned to Randolph.

"Perhaps you'll believe Mr. Langdon's son, Mr. Haines?"

Randolph Langdon stepped forward.

"It's true, Haines," he said; "my father's money is in Altacoola lands."

Haines looked him up and down, with a sneer.

"Your money may be," he said. "I don't think you're a bit too good for it, but your father is a different kind."

Carolina Langdon stood at the back of the room, nervously awaiting the moment when, she knew, she would be forced into the unpleasant discussion.

"I reckon you can't refuse to believe Miss Langdon," drawled Norton, with aggravated deliberation.

"Of course," stammered Haines, "I'd believe it if Miss Langdon says it's so."

The Congressman turned toward Carolina as he spoke and fixed on her a tense look which spelled as plainly as though spoken, "It's all in your hands, my fortune—yours."

She slowly drew across the room. Haines could hardly conceal the turmoil of his mind. The world seemed suddenly snatched from around him, leaving her figure alone before him. Would she affirm what Norton and Randolph had said? He must believe her. But surely it was impossible that she——

Carolina played for time. She feared the making of a false move.

"I don't understand?" she said inquiringly to Norton.

He calmly began an elaborate explanation.

"Miss Langdon, this secretary has discovered that there is a certain perfectly legitimate venture in Altacoola lands being carried on through certain influential people we know and by me. The blood of the young reformer is boiling. He is going straight to your father with the facts.

"I have tried to explain to him how it will needlessly embarrass the Senator and spoil his own future. He won't believe me. He won't believe your brother. Perhaps you can make it clear."

At last Carolina nerved herself to speak.

"You had better not go to my father, Mr. Haines. It will do no good. He—is—in—the deal! You must believe me when I tell you so."

The girl took her eyes from the secretary. He was plainly suffering.

CHAPTER XV

CAROLINA LANGDON'S ADVICE

"LET me speak to Mr. Haines alone," said Carolina to Norton and her brother.

Norton turned a triumphant grin at Randolph as he beckoned him out and whispered: "Leave him to her. It's all right. That New York dude has been riding for a fall—he's going to get it now."

"I am sorry, so sorry this should have occurred, Mr. Haines," Carolina said gently.

The secretary looked up slowly, his face drawn. It was an effort for him to speak.

"I can't understand it," he said. "I mightn't have thought so much of this a month ago, but I have come to love the Senator almost as a son, and to think that he could be like the rest of that bunch is awful."

"You are too much of an idealist, Mr. Haines," said the girl.

"And you? What do you think of it?" he demanded.

The girl's glance wavered.

"Don't idealize me too much, either, Mr. Haines. I didn't think it was much. Perhaps I don't understand business any too well."

"But you see now?" insisted the man.

The girl looked up at him sorrowfully.

"Yes; I see at least that you and father can never work together now."

Haines nodded affirmatively.

"I suppose so. I'm thinking of that. How am I to leave him? We've been so close. I've been so fond of him. I don't know how I could tell him."

In girlish, friendly fashion Carolina rested her hand on his arm.

"Won't you take my advice, Mr. Haines? Go away without seeing him. Just leave a note to say you have gone. He will understand. It will be easier for both that way—easier for him, easier for you." She paused, looking at him appealingly as she ended very softly, "And easier for me, Mr. Haines."

He looked at her thoughtfully.

"Easier for you?" he said. "Very well, I'll do it that way."

The secretary stepped slowly to his desk, sat down and started to write the note. Carolina watched him curiously.

"What will you do," she asked, "now that you have given up this position?"

"Oh, I can always go back to newspaper work," he answered without looking up.

The term "newspaper work" gave Carolina a shock. She had forgotten that this man had been a reporter. Here he was turned loose with the knowledge of this "deal," which she knew would be popular material for newspapers to print. She must gain still another point, and she felt that she had enough power to win against him.

"I'm going to ask you still another favor," she said.

Bud returned her look with a bitter smile.

"What is it?"

"You have learned about this—this land matter and——"

"Oh, yes! I can guess. You want me to keep quiet about it—to hush it up," a shade of scorn in his tone.

"I only asked this so that you would not disgrace me," she pleaded.

Disillusioned at last, robbed of his lifelong optimism, shorn of his ideals, even his love—for he began to despise this beatiful, misguided woman—Haines sat broken in spirit, thinking how quickly the brightness of life fades to blackness.

"Very well," he said sadly. "I suppose *you* are innocent. I'll save you. If they're all—your father, too—crooked, why shouldn't I be crooked? All right; I won't say anything."

"I only ask you not to disgrace me," pleaded the girl. "You will promise that?"

"It's a promise."

She sighed in relief.

"Father will be coming back soon," she said. "You won't want to see him."

Haines arose.

"No, I won't want to see him. Give him this note. I'll have to come back while he's away to clear up some things. Good-by."

Haines bowed and hurried from the room through a side doorway just as Senator Langdon came in through the main entrance.

"Bud! Bud!" he called, but the secretary did not halt.

Carolina Langdon stood with Haines' note in her hand, wondering at what she had done. She regretted having become entangled in the wars of men in Washington. She saw that the man's game was played too strongly, too furiously fast, for most

women to enter, yet she rejoiced that the coveted fortune had not been lost. She was sorry that her means of saving it had not been less questionable. She saw that ambition and honesty, ambition and truth, with difficulty follow the same path.

Senator Langdon's face was unusually grave as he came to greet Carolina. Lines showed in his face that the daughter had never noticed before.

She saw Norton and Randolph, who had followed him, exchange significant glances—jubilant glances—and wondered what new development they had maneuvered.

"He's gone without a word," the Senator sighed. "Well, perhap's that's best."

"He left a note for you," said the girl, handing him the letter which Haines had given her.

Langdon opened it and read:

"I am giving up the job. You can understand why. The least said about it between us the better. I am sorry. That's all. BUD HAINES."

Slowly he read the letter a second time.

"And he was making the best kind of a secretary, I thought."

Divining that something against Haines had been told her father, Carolina glanced at Norton.

"I told your father how we caught Mr. Haines," he spoke as an answer to her.

The girl was startled. She had not thought that things would go this far.

"I told him how Haines wanted to get in some land speculation scheme with Altacoola, how we tricked him and caught him with the goods when he made the proposition to me and how we forced him to confess."

"You told father that?" gasped Carolina.

Norton nodded.

"I don't understand it," said Langdon. "To think that he was that kind!"

Son Randolph now took his turn in the case against the secretary.

"We were both here, father. I heard him—Carolina heard him," he said. "Didn't you, Carolina?"

"Yes," said the girl weakly, "I was here." Then she turned abruptly. "I must go," she said, "must go right away. Mrs. Holcomb is waiting for me."

The Senator turned to his desk bent and discouraged.

"I suppose I should have taken a secretary who was a Southerner and a gentleman. Well, Randolph, you'll have to act now. Take this letter——"

The young man sat down and took the following from the Senator's diction:

"MR. HAINES—

"Sir: I quite understand your feelings and the impossibility of your continuing in my employ. The least said about it the better. I am sorry, too.

"WILLIAM H. LANGDON."

"You boys run away. I've got to think," said the Senator.

When the pair had gone the old man drew the letter to him, and below his signature he added a postscript: "Don't forget there's some money coming to you."

Walking across the room to leave, he sighed:

"He was making the best kind of a secretary."

CHAPTER XVI

A RESCUE IN THE NICK OF TIME

LATER in that never-to-be-forgotten day Bud Haines ventured back to his desk in the committee room, after first ascertaining that Senator Langdon would not return. Some of the Senator's papers must be straightened out, and he wanted personal documents of his own.

The secretary regretfully, sorrowfully performed these final duties and found himself stopping at various intervals to try to explain to himself how he had been deceived in both the Langdons, father and daughter. He had to give up both problems. To him neither was explainable. "I've known enough Senators to know that I'd never meet an honest one," he muttered. "But as to women—well, there's too much carefully selected wisdom in their innocence to suit me."

This cynic, new born from the shell of the chronic idealist that was, suddenly was disturbed in his ruminations by a sound at the door. Looking up, he saw Hope Georgia Langdon standing, shyly, embarrassed, in the main entrance.

"Mr. Haines," she said, timidly.

Bud jumped to his feet.

"Yes, Miss Hope Georgia."

As the Senator's younger daughter came toward him he noticed that she was excited over something, and for a newly made cynic he took altogether too

much notice of her youthful beauty, her fresh, rosy complexion and her dancing, sparkling eyes. The thought occurred to him, "What a woman she will make—if she doesn't imitate her sister!"

"I couldn't let you go, Mr. Haines, without telling you good-by and letting you know that, no matter what the others say, I don't think there has been anything wrong."

Before Haines could reply, the young girl rushed on, excitedly:

"That's why I came. I know father and Carolina won't like it—they won't think it's nice—but I wanted to say to you that I don't think one ought to believe things against one you've liked and trusted."

"You think one ought not," said Haines. "So do I; but in this case the proofs were very strong. What are you going to do when people you can't doubt pledge their word?"

The girl tossed her head.

"Well, the only one's word I'd like to take would be the person accused. I know I'm only a girl, Mr. Haines, and I'm not grown up, but you've made a mistake. Do try to clear things up. Why don't you see father and talk with him? Please do, Mr. Haines."

Little realizing that the girl was speaking in his own favor, for he knew not the need for such speaking, he believed her to be defending her father. He grasped her hands impulsively.

"You have grown up very much since you came to the capital, haven't you?" he said. "And you are right, Miss Hope. I ought to have known even when the facts were against him that your father couldn't have been really crooked. He can't be."

Hope Langdon's face flushed indignantly.

"Father crooked? Who said so? Who dared say that?" she exclaimed.

"Why, they told me he had sold out on the Altacoola bill. They said he was trying to make money on Altacoola. That's why I quit."

The flame of anger still was spread on the girl's face.

"They said that!" she exclaimed. "Then they lied. They said you were the crooked one. Why, father thinks you sold out on Altacoola. They said you were trying to make money on that navy yard."

"What! They said I was crooked!" Haines fairly shouted. He rushed around the desk and caught the girl by both hands.

"I see it!" he cried. "I see it! There's something I'm not just on to. You thought it was I; your father thinks——"

"Of course," exclaimed Hope, quite as excited as he. "I couldn't believe it. That's why I came back to get you to explain. I wanted you to disprove the charge."

"I should say I would," cried the secretary.

"I knew it! I knew it! They couldn't make me believe anything against you. I knew you were all I thought you. Oh, Mr. Haines, prove you are that for my——"

Then Hope Georgia abruptly stopped. She had lost her head, and in the enthusiasm of the moment had revealed her real feelings—something she would never do presumably when she grew more wise in the ways of women.

She suddenly thrust Haines' hands from her own and stood staring at him, wondering—wondering if he had guessed.

Strangely enough, under the circumstances, the

girl was the first to recover and break the awkward silence.

"Come to our house to-night, Mr. Haines. There's to be a dinner and a musicale, as you know; but that won't matter. No matter who says no, I promise you that you shall see father. There shall be an explanation."

"Thank you, Miss Hope. You don't realize all you've done for me," said Bud, seriously. "It's a wonderful thing to find a girl who believes in a man. You've taught me a lot, Miss Hope. Thank you."

"Good-by, Mr. Haines. Come to-night," she said, as she turned and hurried away.

Bud Haines stood looking after her, thoughtfully.

"What a stunning girl she is! I've seemed to overlook her, with the rush of events—and Carolina," he murmured, softly. "We never were such very great friends, yet she believes in me. What a beauty she is!"

A messenger boy broke in on his musings with a letter for Senator Langdon marked "Important."

"Guess I'm secretary enough yet to answer this," he thought, tearing it open.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed as he read it. "Here's the chance to get to the bottom of this Altacoola proposition. It's from Peabody."

Haines read the following:

"DEAR SENATOR LANGDON: I am going to Philadelphia to-night. Urgent call from a company for which I am counsel, so I probably won't be able to confer with you regarding the committee's choice for the naval base. But I know you are for Altacoola and trust to you to do all you can for that

site. I, of course, consider the matter definitely settled."

"This situation will enable Langdon to bluff Peabody and draw out of him all the inside of the Altacoola business—ought to, anyway. Guess some Gulf City talk will smoke him out."

Haines rushed out and across the hall, to reappear literally hauling in a stenographer by the scruff of the neck. "Here, you, take this dictation —record time," he cried:

"SENATOR HORATIO PEABODY, Louis Napoleon Hotel: You are going to Philadelphia to-night, I know, leaving the report on the naval base to me. I have just come on various aspects of the situation which make me incline very favorably toward Gulf City. I am looking into the matter and, of course, shall act according to my best judgment. That is what you will want me to do, I know. Sincerely yours, WILLIAM H. LANGDON."

"I don't think Senator Peabody will go to Philadelphia to-night," laughed Haines grimly, as he addressed the envelope, "and I think that when the 'boss of the Senate' hurries around to the Langdon house instead there will be more than one kind of music, more than one kind of food eaten—perhaps crow—before the evening is over."

Seizing his hat, Bud rushed to the door to look up a messenger.

"It's all in Langdon's hands now," he cried. "Here's where I resign my position as United States Senator."

CHAPTER XVII

THE CONSPIRATORS OUTWITTED

Senator Langdon's dinners had well won popularity in Washington. Invitations to them were rarely answered by the sending of "regrets." He had brought his old Mississippi cook from the plantation, whose Southern dishes had caused the Secretary of State himself to make the Senator an offer for the chef's services. "No use bidding for old General Washington," said the Senator on that notable occasion. "He wouldn't leave my kitchen, sir, even to accept the presidency itself. Why, I couldn't even discharge him if I wanted to. I tried to let him go once, sir, and the old general made me feel so ashamed of myself that I actually cried, sir."

Peabody and Stevens were the dinner guests tonight, as they were to confer afterward with Langdon and settle on the action of the naval affairs committee regarding the naval base. The three, being a majority, could control the action of the committee.

Senator Peabody had finally postponed leaving for Philadelphia until the midnight train in order to be present, he assured Langdon as the trio entered the library. The girls, Norton and Randolph were left to oversee preparations for the prominent Washingtonians invited to attend the musicale to be given later in the evening.

Carolina and Hope Georgia were in distinctly different moods—the elder, vivacious, elated over the bright outlook for her future; the younger, cast down and wearing a worried expression. Norton and Randolph in jubilant spirit tried to cheer her, and failing, resorted to taunts about some imaginary love affair.

The courage of the afternoon, which had enabled her to speak to Haines as she had, was gone; girlish fears now swept over her as to the outcome of the evening. Haines had not come! Was he really guilty and had promised to come merely to get rid of her? Why was he late? If he did come, would she be able to have her father see him, as she had promised? If she failed, and she might, she would never see this young man again.

"If I looked as unhappy as you, Hope, I'd go to bed and not discourage our guests as they arrive," Carolina suggested. "Our floral decorations alone for to-night cost $700, and the musical program cost over $3,000. The most fashionable folks in Washington coming—what more could you want, Hope? Isn't it perfectly glorious? Why——"

"Mr. Haines is below, asking to see Senator Langdon," announced a servant, entering.

"Oh, I knew he'd come! I knew it! I knew it!" cried Hope Georgia in pure ecstasy, clapping her hands.

The three plotters turned on the girl in amazement; then they stared at each other.

"Mr. Haines!" ejaculated Carolina.

"Haines!" exclaimed Randolph, hurriedly leaving the room.

"Haines!" sneered Norton. "We can take care of him. The Senator won't see him."

Carolina caught the suggestion.

"Tell Mr. Haines that Senator Langdon regrets that he cannot possibly receive him," she directed.

"Carolina!"

There was a ring of protest and pain in Hope Georgia's voice as she darted out of the door after the servant.

"What's the matter with that girl?" asked Norton, trying to be calm.

Carolina shook her head.

"I don't know. She's queer to-day. I believe she imagines herself in love with Mr. Haines."

"Aren't you afraid she'll make trouble?"

The other sister laughed confidently.

"Little Hope make trouble? Of course not. If she does, we can always frighten her into obedience."

The door reopened and Hope entered, followed by Bud Haines. The girl's head was high; her cheeks were red; her eyes glittered ominously.

"I brought him back, Carolina," she said coolly. "Father will want to see him. I know there has been some mistake."

"Yes," supplemented Bud, "there has been a decided mistake, and I must refuse to accept the word that came to me from Senator Langdon."

Carolina Langdon drew herself up in her most dignified manner.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Haines, but you must accept it," she said.

"Exactly," seconded Norton. "Senator Langdon entirely declines to receive you."

"I don't trust anything you say, Congressman Norton, and I may say also that I recognize no right of yours to interfere in any affair between me and the Langdon family."

"Perhaps I can explain my right, Mr. Haines,"

Norton said coolly, stepping beside Carolina. "I have just had the pleasure of announcing to Miss Hope Georgia Langdon my engagement to Miss Carolina Langdon."

Haines, entirely unprepared for such a dénoûment, shot a searching glance at Carolina. She bowed her head in affirmation.

"So that's why you tried to ruin me!" he cried. "You're both from the same mold," turning from Carolina Langdon to Congressman Norton, then back to the girl.

They stood facing each other when Randolph Langdon returned. At sight of Bud Haines he started, stopped short a second, then came forward quickly.

"Mr. Haines, my father has declared that he will not see you, and either you leave this house at once or I shall call the servants."

Bud looked at young Langdon contemptuously.

"Yes, I think you would need some help." he sneered, feeling in his veins the rush of red blood, the determination in his heart that had a few years back carried him through eighty yards of struggling Yale football players to a touchdown.

The Senator's son drew back his arm, but the confident look of the New Yorker restrained him.

"Mr. Haines, in the South gentlemen do not make scenes of violence before ladies."

The cold rebuke of Carolina cut into the silence.

Haines stood in perplexity. He did not know what to do or how to get to the Senator. It was Hope who came to his rescue.

"I'll tell father you are here. I'll make him come, Mr. Haines. He shall see you."

With the air of a defiant little princess she started for the door.

"Hope, I forbid you doing any such thing," exclaimed her older sister, but the younger girl paid no attention. Randolph caught her arm.

"You shall not, Hope," he cried.

Hope Georgia struggled and pulled her arm free.

"I reckon I just got to do what seems right to me, Randolph," she exclaimed. "I reckon I've grown up to-night, and I tell you—I tell all of you" —she whirled and faced them—"there's something wrong here, and father is going to see Mr. Haines to-night, and they are going to settle it."

Norton alone was equal to the situation, temporarily at least.

"I'll be fair with you, Hope," he said reassuringly, and she stopped in her flight to the hall door. "I'll take Carolina and Randolph in to see the Senator, and we'll tell him Mr. Haines is here. Perhaps we had better tell the Senator," Norton suggested, beckoning to Carolina and her brother. "Let Mr. Haines wait here, and we will make the situation clear to the Senator."

"You'd better make it very clear," exclaimed the younger girl, "for I'm going to stay here with Mr. Haines until he has seen father."

The guilty trio, fearful of this new and unexplainable activity of Hope Georgia, slowly departed in search of Senator Langdon to make a last desperate attempt to prevent him from meeting this pestilential secretary that was—and might be again.

When the door closed after them Hope came down to the table where Bud Haines was standing.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Haines?" she said. "I'll—I'll try to entertain you until father comes," she said weakly, realizing that again she was alone with the man she loved.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOPE LANGDON'S HOUR OF TRIUMPH

HAINES sat at a table in the reception-room, across from Hope Georgia, and his gratitude for her battle in his favor mingled with a realization of qualities in this young lady that he had never before noticed. Probably he did not know that what he had really seen in her that day and that evening was the sudden transition from girlhood to womanhood, her casting aside of thoughtless, irresponsive youth and the shouldering of the responsibilities of the grown woman who would do her share in the world's work.

He stared across in astonishment at this slip of a girl who had outwitted two resourceful men and an older sister of unquestioned ability.

"I do not recognize you, Miss Hope," he said finally.

"Perhaps you never looked at me before," she suggested archly, feeling instinctively that this was her hour; that the man she loved was at this moment thinking more about her than of anything else in the world.

Haines made a gesture of regret.

"That must be it," he agreed. Then he leaned forward eagerly. "But I'm looking at you now, and I like looking at you. I like what you've done for me."

"Oh, that was nothing, Mr. Haines," she ex-

claimed airily, her intuition telling her of her sway over the man.

"Nothing!" he exclaimed. "Well, it's more than any one ever did for me before. I've known lots of girls——"

"I don't doubt that, Mr. Haines," Hope interjected, with a light laugh.

"Yes, I say I've known lots of girls, but there's never been one who showed herself such a true friend as you have been. There's never been any one who believed in me this way when I was practically down and out."

"Perhaps you've never been down and out before, Mr. Haines, so they never had a chance to show whether they believed in you or not."

"That may be one reason," he answered. "I wonder why"—he paused—"I wonder why your sister Carolina did not believe in me."

"You were quite fond of her, weren't you?" the girl began, then stopped and turned away her head.

Haines gazed curiously at Hope.

"I was, yes. I even thought I loved her, but I soon saw my mistake. It wasn't love. It was only a kind of——"

Suddenly pausing, Bud Haines shot a swift glance at the girl.

"What wonderful hair you have, Miss Hope."

The girl smiled invitingly.

"Think so?"

"Yes," he declared earnestly. "I know so. I never noticed it before, but I guess lots of fellows down in Mississippi have."

Hope's tantalizing smile worried him. "I hope you are not secretly engaged too!" he exclaimed.

"No, oh, no!" she answered quickly, before she thought.

"Or in love?" he asked seriously.

Haines had stood up and was now leaning intently over the table. He realized the difference between the feeling he had had for Carolina and the tender emotion that thrilled him as he thought of the sweet girl before him. This time he knew he was not mistaken. He knew that he truly loved Hope Langdon.

"Or in love?" he asked again, anxious at her silence.

Hope looked at him slowly. A faint blush illumined her face.

"Oh, don't let's talk about me," she exclaimed.

"But I want to talk about you," he cried. "I don't want to talk about anything else. I must talk about you, and I'm going to talk whether you want to hear or not. You've believed in me when nobody else believed. You've fought for me when everybody else was fighting against me. You've shown that you think I am honest and worthy of a woman's faith. You fought your own family for me. Nobody has ever done for me what you have, and—and——"

He faltered, full of what he was about to say.

"And you're grateful," she ended.

He looked her squarely in the eyes as though to fathom her thoughts. Then he reached toward the girl and seized both her hands.

"Grateful nothing!" he cried. "I'm not grateful. I'm in love—in love with you. I want you—want you as I never wanted anything or anybody before, and I tell you I'm going to have you. Do you hear?"

Hope could not hide her agitation. The light in her eyes showed she was all a woman.

"Oh, nothing in the world could happen as

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quickly as that, Mr. Haines!" she protested, with her last attempt at archness.

"Nothing could?" he threatened. "I'll show you."

He advanced quickly around the table, but the girl darted just beyond his grasp. Then she paused —and her lover gathered her in his arms.

"Hope, my dear, you are my own," was all he could say as he bent over to kiss the lips that were not refused to him.

Hope released herself from his fervent grasp.

"I love you, I do love you," she said fondly. "I believe in you, and father must too. You've got to straighten this tangle out now, for my sake as well as your own. Father will listen."

"It's all so strange, so wonderful, I can hardly understand it," began Haines slowly, as he held the girl's hands.

Unknown to both, the door leading from the hall had opened to admit Senator Langdon into the lower end of the room. Surprised at the sight of the couple, so seriously intent on each other, he made a sudden gesture of anger, then, apparently changing his mind, advanced toward them.

"I believe you want to see me, sir," he said to Haines. "I hope you'll be brief. I have very little time to spare from my guests."

Hope's bosom fluttered timorously at the interruption. The man nervously stepped forward.

"I sha'n't take much of your time, Senator Langdon," he said. "There has been a misunderstanding, a terrible mistake. I am sure I can convince you."

Senator Langdon hesitated doubtfully, half turned toward Carolina, Randolph and Norton, who had followed him, and again faced Haines.

Hope pressed her father's arm and looked up into his face entreatingly. Randolph, observing this, quickly stepped close to the Senator's side, saying, "I can settle with this Mr. Haines for you."

Waving his son aside, the Senator finally spoke.

"I reckon there's been too many attending to my business and settling my affairs, Randolph," he said. "I think for a change I'll settle a few of my own. All of you children go out and leave me here with Mr. Haines."

CHAPTER XIX

SENATOR LANGDON LEARNS THE TRUTH

When they were alone Haines faced the Senator and spoke determinedly.

"They told you I was not running straight," he said.

The Senator nodded, and the lines about his mouth deepened.

"Yes."

Bud Haines stiffened at the word. Every muscle in his body seemed to become rigid as he mentally vowed that he would retaliate against his traducers if it cost him his life to do it. Hope had informed him only too accurately, he now realized. Little did the Senator know that what he was now about to hear would give him one of the severest shocks of his life.

"They told me you weren't running straight," said Haines deliberately. "Now, neither one of us has been crooked, but somebody else has been, and this was the plan to keep us apart."

"Norton told me you were speculating in Altacoola lands," said Langdon.

"And Norton told me the same of you," retorted Bud.

The Senator's face grew very serious.

"But my daughter, Miss Carolina Langdon, confirmed Norton's story."

Haines here faced the most difficult part of his

interview. He hardly knew how to answer. His manhood rebelled against placing any blame on a woman. He revolted at the thought of ruining a father's faith in his daughter's honesty, especially when that father was the man he most admired, a man for whom he had genuine, deep-rooted affection. But it was necessary that the words be spoken.

"I hate to tell you, sir," he said in a low, uncertain voice, "that it was your daughter Carolina who made me believe this story told about you and vouched for by your son Randolph."

Langdon started back aghast. He stared at Haines and knew that he spoke the truth. Then his white head sank pathetically. Tears welled into the eyes of the planter, and this sturdy old fighting man dropped weakly into a chair, sobbing convulsively, broken in spirit and wearied in body.

At length Haines spoke to his stricken chief.

"I know it hurts," he said. "It hurt me to have to say it. Don't believe it until you get it out of Norton, but then you must do something."

Langdon came to his feet, mopping his cheeks. But there was no weakness in him now. Yes, he would do something. He would go after the thieves that had turned his own flesh and blood against him and root them all out—show them all up.

"Oh, I'll do something," he said grimly. "I'm going to make up for lost time. Of course, Norton is speculating. Who's behind him?"

"Stevens and Peabody, I'm positive," answered Haines, "and behind them is Standard Steel."

"What!" exclaimed Langdon. "Stevens in a swindle like this! Are you sure? How do you know?"

"A Gulf City man who couldn't carry his liquor

gave me some clues, and I worked Norton into telling some more," answered the secretary. "Where is Peabody?"

"He's here now."

"Then he hasn't got my letter yet. I sent him a note and signed your name, Senator, to the effect that the Gulf City claims have been brought before you so strongly that you might vote for Gulf City."

Langdon was amazed.

"You sent that note," he exclaimed, "when you know Altacoola is the only proper place and Gulf City is a mud bank?"

The newspaper man smiled.

"Of course," he agreed, "but I had to get a rise out of Peabody. This will show where he stands."

"Oh," said Langdon, "I understand. Thanks, boy."

A servant entered with a note.

"For Senator Peabody, sir, marked 'Urgent.' The messenger's been hunting him for some hours."

Langdon looked shrewdly at Bud, then turned to the servant.

"You keep that note until I ring for you, then bring it to Senator Peabody. Understand? No matter how urgent it's marked."

The man bowed.

"Yes, sir."

"Now tell Mr. Norton, Miss Langdon and Mr. Randolph to come here."

The Senator turned back to his secretary.

"I expect I'm going to be pretty busy the rest of the evening, Bud, so in case I forget to mention it again, remember to show up at your old desk in the morning."

"I will. Thank you, sir."

"You sent for us, Senator," said Norton, approaching with his two dupes.

"You are interested in Altacoola lands," the Senator angrily charged.

"I am, sir," he said.

"And you told Mr. Haines that I was interested in Altacoola lands?"

The schemer hesitated, and the Senator broke in on him in rage.

"Speak out, man! Tell the truth, if you can."

"I did," admitted the Congressman finally.

"Was there any particular reason for your not telling the truth?" demanded the Mississippian in threatening tone.

"I told the truth," replied Norton. "You are interested in them."

For an instant Langdon seemed about to step toward him, then he controlled himself.

"I didn't know it," he said.

"You have several things to learn, Senator," declared the Congressman.

"I have things to learn and things to teach," he said. "But go on. Why am I interested?"

"You are interested, Senator," replied the trickster, making his big play, "through your son, Randolph, who invested $50,000 of your money in Altacoola, and also through your daughter, Miss Carolina, who, acting on my advice, has put her own money—$25,000—in Altacoola land also."

For a moment Langdon was speechless. It was too much at first for the honest old Southerner to comprehend.

"You mean," he gasped at last, "that you induce a boy to put $50,000 in Altacoola land when you knew I had to vote on the bill? And you even

let my daughter put her money in the same scheme?"

"Of course, I did. It was a splendid chance, and I let your son in for friendship and your daughter because she has done me the honor to promise to become my wife."

"What! You have my daughter's promise to marry you, you——"

"She admits it herself."

"Then I reckon here's where I lose a prospective son-in-law," sneered Langdon. "But that's unimportant. Now, Norton, who's behind you?"

"I must decline to answer that."

Langdon looked at him sternly.

"Very well," he said. "You are too small to count. I'll find out for myself. Now you go to my study and wait there until I send for you. I must be alone with my children."

When Norton and Haines had left them, Langdon turned sadly to the two children who had disgraced him.

"Can you understand?" he said. "Do you know what you've done to me?"

"What, father? We've done nothing wrong!" protested Carolina.

"They told me it was perfectly legitimate," urged Randolph. "They said everybody—Peabody and Stevens and the rest—were in it, and Peabody is the boss of the Senate."

"Yes, my boy," assented the old planter, "he's the leader in the Senate, and that's the shameful part of all this—that a man of his high standing should set you so miserable an example."

Randolph Langdon was not a vicious lad, not a youth who preferred or chose wrongdoing for the increased rewards it offered. He was at heart a

chivalrous, straightforward, trustful Southern boy who believed in the splendid traditions of his family and loved his father as a son should a parent having the qualities of the old hero of Crawfordsville. Jealous of his honor, he had been a victim of Norton's wiles because of the Congressman's position and persuasiveness, because this companion of his young days had won his confidence and had not hesitated to distort the lad's idea of what was right and what was wrong.

Randolph began an indignant protest against his father's reproof when the Senator cut him short.

"Don't you see?" said the Senator. "I can understand there being rascals in the outside world and that they should believe your careless, foolish old father lawful game, but that he should be thought a tool for dishonest thieving by members of his own family is incomprehensible.

"Randolph, my son, Carolina, my daughter, through all their generations the Langdons have been honorable. Your mother was a Randolph, and this from you! Oh, Carolina! And you, Randolph! How could you? How could you betray or seek to betray your father, who sees in you the image of your dear mother, who has gone?"

CHAPTER XX

THE CALL TO ARMS

Both Randolph and Carolina were deeply affected by their father's words.

The daughter attempted to take on herself the blame for her brother's action.

"I was the older one. I might have stopped him if I had wished, and should bear the burden."

"No, no, father," exclaimed the youth, his inborn self-reliance prompting him to shoulder the consequences of his own mistakes. "I, and I alone, am responsible for what I did. I did not realize that it was wrong. I will not hide behind Carolina."

Carolina Langdon bore herself better than was to have been expected under the strain of the painful interview. She saw more clearly now how she had erred. She was undergoing an inward revolution that would make it impossible for her ever again to veer so far from the line of duty to her father, her family and to herself.

When Randolph had finished Carolina took up her own defense, and eloquently she pleaded the defense of many a woman who yearns for what she has not got, for what may be beyond her reach—the defense of the woman who chafes under the limitations of worldly position, of sex and of opportunity. It was the defense of an ambitious woman.

"Perhaps I ought to have been a man of the

Langdon family," she exclaimed. "Father, oh, can't you understand that I couldn't doze my life away down on those plantations? You don't know what ambition is. I had to have the world. I had to have money. If I had been a man I would have tried big financial enterprises. I should have liked to fight for a fortune. You wouldn't have condemned me then. You might have said my methods were bold, but if I succeeded I would have been a great man. But just because I am a woman you think I must sit home with my knitting. No, father, the world does move. Women must have an equal chance with men, but I wish I had been a man!"

"Even then I hope you would have been a gentleman," rebuked her father sternly. "Women should have an equal chance, Carolina. They should have an equal chance for the same virtues as men, not for the same vices."

"But an equal chance," returned the girl fervidly. "There, father, you have admitted what I have tried to prove. The woman with the spirit of a man, the spirit that cries to a woman. 'Advance,' 'Accomplish,' 'Be something,' 'Strike for yourself,' cannot sit idly by while all the world moves on. If it is true that I have chosen the wrong means, the wrong way, to better my lot I did it through ignorance, and that ignorance is the fault of the times in which I live, of the system that guides the era in which I live.

"I am what the world calls 'educated,' but the world, the world of men, knows better. It laughs at me. It has cheated me because I am a woman. The world of men has fenced me in and hobbled me with convention, with precedent, with fictitious sentiment. If I pursue the business of men as they themselves would pursue it I am called an ungrate-

"YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE YOUR MEDICINE LIKE A MAN."—Page 133.

ful daughter. If I should adopt the morals of men I would be called a fallen woman. If I adopted the religion of men I would have no religion at all. Turn what way I will——"

"But not every woman feels the way you do, my daughter," broke in the Senator.

"No, you are right, because their spirit has been crushed by generations, by centuries of forced subserviency to men. They tell us we should be thankful that we do not live in China, where women are physical slaves to men. In our country they are forced to be mental and social slaves to men. Is one very much worse than the other?"

"Then, dear," and her father's tone was very gentle, "if you want an equal chance—want to be equal to a man—you must take your medicine with Randolph, like a man."

"What are you going to do, sir?" she asked, afraid.

"I'm going to spoil all your little scheme, dear," he returned, smiling sadly. "I'm going, I fear, to make you lose all your money. I'd like to make it easy for you, but I can't. You've got to take your medicine, children, and when it's all over back there in Mississippi I shall be able, I hope, to patch up your broken lives, and together we will work out your mistakes. I can't think of that now. The honor of the Langdons calls. This is the time for the fight, and any one who fights against me must take the consequences."

He walked over and touched the bell.

"Thomas," he said to the servant who responded, "take that letter at once to Senator Peabody, in the library."

"What is it, sir?" asked Randolph.

"It's the call to arms," responded his father grimly.

Senator Peabody read the letter to which Haines had signed Langdon's name and jumped up from his chair in the library in astonishment. Without a word to the startled Stevens he rushed to confront Langdon.

"What's the meaning of this?" he shouted as he burst in on the junior Senator from Mississippi.

"Of what?" asked the Southerner, with a blandness that added fuel to Peabody's irritation.

"Don't trifle with me, sir!" cried "the boss of the Senate." "This letter. You sent it. Explain it! I'm in no mood to joke."

Langdon looked at him calmly.

"I think the letter is quite plain, Senator," he said. "You can read." Then he turned to his daughter. "This discussion cannot possibly interest you, my dear. Will you go to the drawing-room to receive our guests?"

Carolina obeyed. She seemed to be discovering new qualities in this father whom she had considered to be too old-fashioned for his time.

"Now, Senator, go ahead, and, Randolph, you bring Stevens."

"You're switching to Gulf City?" demanded Peabody.

"I'm considering Gulf City," agreed Langdon.

Peabody brought down his fist on the table.

"It's too late to consider anything, Langdon," he cried. "We're committed to Altacoola, and Altacoola it is. I don't care what you heard of Gulf City. Now, I'd like to settle this thing in a friendly manner, Langdon. I like always for every member of the Senate to have his share of the power and the patronage. We've been glad to put you forward

in this naval base matter. We appreciate the straightforwardness, the honesty of your character. You look well. You're the kind of politician the public thinks it wants nowadays, but you've been in the Senate long enough to know that bills have to pass, and you know you can't get through anything without my friends, and I tell you now I'll throttle any Gulf City plan you bring up."

"Then if you are as sure of that you can't object to my being for Gulf City?" asked Langdon.

"Are you financially interested in Gulf City?" demanded Peabody.

"Senator Peabody!" exclaimed Langdon.

"Don't flare up, Langdon," retorted Peabody. "That sort of thing has happened in the Senate. There are often perfectly legitimate profits to be made in some regular commercial venture by a man who has inside information as to what's doing up on Capitol Hill."

"Senator Peabody," asked Langdon, "why are you so strong for Altacoola?"

The Pennsylvanian hesitated.

"Its natural advantages," he said at last.

The Southerner shook his head.

"Oh, that's all? Well, if natural advantages are going to settle it, and not influence, go ahead and vote, and I'll just bring in a minority report for Gulf City."

"The boss of the Senate" was in a corner now.

"Confound it, Langdon, if you will have it, I am interested in Altacoola."

Langdon nodded.

"That's all I wanted to know," he said.

"Now you see why it's got to be Altacoola," persisted the boss.

"I don't mind telling you, then, Senator Pea-

body," answered Langdon calmly, "that my being for Gulf City was a bluff. I've been trying to draw you out. Gulf City is a mud bank and no more fitted to be a naval base than Keokuk, Ia. Altacoola it's got to be, for the good of the country and the honor of Mississippi.

"And one thing more, Senator. I'd just like to add that not a single man connected with that committee is going to make a cent out of the deal. You get that straight?"

CHAPTER XXI

"IF YOU CAN'T BUY A SENATOR, THREATEN HIM"

SENATOR PEABODY was the most surprised man in Washington when he heard the junior Senator from Mississippi state that no one was to enrich himself out of the government naval base project.

He heaped a mental anathema on the head of Stevens for saddling such a man on the Senate "machine," for Langdon would of course never had been put on "naval affairs" (just now very important to the machine) without the "O. K." of Stevens, who had won a heretofore thoroughly reliable reputation as a judge of men, or of what purported to be men. The thought that at this time, of all times, there should be a man on the committee on naval affairs that could not be "handled" was sufficient to make him who reveled in the title of "boss of the Senate" determine that he must get another chief lieutenant to replace Stevens, who had proved so trustworthy in the past. Stevens had lost his cunning!

As the vote of Langdon could not be secured by humbug or in exchange for favors and as it could not be "delivered," Peabody, of course, was willing to pay in actual cash for the vote. This was the final step but one in political conspiracies of this nature—cash. But Langdon would not take cash, so Peabody had to resort to the last agency of the trained and corrupt manipulator of legislation.

He would threaten.

Moreover, he knew that to make threats effective, if it is possible to do so, they must be led up to systematically—that is, they should be made at the right time. The scene must be set, as in a play.

Senator Peabody glared at Langdon as though to convince the latter that to stand in his way would mean political destruction.

"So nobody is going to make a cent, eh? Well, I suppose you want all the profits for yourself." Turning to Stevens, who had just entered, the Pennsylvanian cried:

"Do you but listen to our suddenly good friend Langdon. He wants to be the only man to make money out of the naval base. He won't listen to any other member of the naval committee making a cent out of it. Why, he——"

"Great God, sir!" exclaimed Langdon. "You are going too far, Peabody. You state what is false, and you know it, you—you——"

"Then you are willing that others should have their rightful share?" put in Stevens. "Oh, I understand now, Senator."

"No, no, no!" cried Langdon. "You do not understand, Senator Stevens, and I must say I am ashamed to speak of you by the honorable title of Senator, sir. I will not listen to any person enriching himself at the Government's expense, and I am your enemy, you, Peabody, and you, Stevens, beyond recall. You both know you misrepresent me."

Langdon walked over to Stevens and faced him.

"Do you remember, Stevens, Lorimer Hawkslee, back in wartime?"

"Yes," said Stevens, puzzled, "I remember him—a very fine gentleman."

The old planter sneered.

"Yes, a very fine gentleman! You remember he got rich out of contracts for supplies furnished to the Confederate Government when it wasn't any too easy for the Confederate Government to pay and when he was in that Government himself. I never quite thought that the act of a gentleman, Stevens. It seemed to me to be very like dishonesty. I refused to speak to Lorimer Hawkslee in the Carroll Hotel at Vicksburg, and when the people there asked me why I told them. I want to warn you, Stevens, that I'm likely to meet you some time in the Carroll Hotel at Vicksburg."

Stevens backed away angrily. "I catch your insinuation, but"—he received a warning glance from Peabody and broke into a pleasant smile calculated to deceive the old planter—"this once I will overlook it because of our old friendship and the old days in Mississippi."

"You are a fine talker, Langdon," said Peabody, coming to Stevens' rescue, "but I can readily see what you are driving at. You want an investigation. You think you will catch some of us with what you reformers call 'the goods,' but forget evidently the entirely simple facts that your family has invested in Altacoola lands more heavily probably than any one else among us. You want to raise a scandal, do you? Well, go on and raise it, but remember that you will have to explain how it happened that there is $50,000 invested in the name of your son, and $25,000 in the name of your daughter, Miss Carolina, not to mention a few thousands put in by the gentleman who, I am given to understand, is to be your son-in-law, Congressman Norton.

"How about that, Norton?" Peabody asked, turn-

ing to the Congressman, who had followed Stevens.

"I corroborate all you've said," remarked Norton. "I can state positively that Senator Langdon knew that his money was going into Altacoola land. I will swear to it if necessary," and he glared bitterly at Carolina's father, feeling certain that the girl would cling to him as opposed to her parent.

Langdon made a threatening move at the Congressman.

"I consider my riddance of you mighty cheap at the price," he cried.

"Come, come, Langdon," fumed Peabody, "I must get away from here to catch the midnight train. Let's get through with this matter. You must realize that you cannot fight me in Washington. You must know that men call me the 'king of the Senate.' I can beat any measure you introduce. I can pass any measure you want passed. I can make you a laughing-stock or a power.

"Why, my friend from Mississippi, I can even have your election to the Senate contested, have a committee appointed to investigate the manner of your election, have that committee decide that you bought your way into the honorable body, the Senate of the United States, and on the strength of that decision have you forfeit your seat! What a pretty heritage to hand down to posterity such a disgrace will be! Why, the very school children of the future will hear about you as 'Looter Langdon,' and their parents will tell them how particularly degrading it was for a man of your reputation to drag into your dishonest schemes your son, sir, and your daughter. For who will believe that this money was not put in these lands without your consent, without your direction, your order? Did

you not sign the mortgage on which this $50,000 was raised?"

Senator Langdon waved his hand deprecatingly. "I'm learning the under-handed ways of you professional politicians. I'm getting wise. I'm learning 'the game,' so I know you're bluffing me, Peabody. But you forget that the game of poker was invented in Mississippi—my native State."

Pressing a button, Langdon summoned a servant and said: "Send in Mr. Haines. I guess I've got to have a witness for my side."

"It's no bluff," spoke Stevens as Haines entered. "Peabody can and will break you like a pipestem; he's done it to other men before you who—who tried to dispute his power. But I'll try to save you. I'll ask him to be merciful. You are not of any importance in the Senate. We do not need to deal with you——"

"Then why do you both spend so much time on me?" asked Langdon innocently. "Why doesn't Peabody go to Philadelphia?"

"Langdon," said Peabody, "you know my control of the Senate is no piece of fiction. But I will forgive your obstinacy, even forget it. I——"

"Look here," cried Langdon, "just because I'm a fat man don't think that I can't lose my temper." He stopped and gazed at his two colleagues.

"Now, you two men stay still one moment, and I'll tell you what really will happen to-morrow," he exploded, "and I'm only a beginner in the game that's your specialty. The naval base is going to Altacoola——"

"Good!" simultaneously cried both Peabody and Stevens. "You're coming in with us?"

"No, I'm not, but I'll pass the bill so that nobody makes a cent, just as I said I would. I'll

fool you both and make you both honest for once in spite of your natural dispositions."

Stevens and the Pennsylvanian stared at each other in disgust.

"Furthermore," continued Langdon, "Altacoola must have the base because I've known for some time that Gulf City was impossible. But some crooked Senators would have made money if they'd known it, so they didn't learn it. Altacoola, that proud arm of our great gulf, will have those battleships floating on her broad bosom and the country will be the better off, and so will the sovereign State of Mississippi—God bless it—but neither Senator Peabody of Pennsylvania nor Senator Stevens of Mississippi is going to be any better because of it. No, and if you men come to my committee room at 12:30 to-morrow noon you'll have a chance to hear how all that's coming about. If you are not there by that time I'll bring in a minority report in favor of Gulf City, just to show you that I know how to play the game—this Washington game——"

"Come, let's go. We can do nothing with him," said Peabody to the senior Senator from Mississippi.

"Well, Senator, in the name of goodness, what are you going to do? How can you win for Altacoola without letting these grafters make money out of it?" asked Haines in astonishment as the other two walked away. "What are you going to do at 12:30 to-morrow?"

Langdon turned to him and rolled his eyes toward the ceiling despairingly.

"I'm blamed if I know!" he exclaimed.

"TO-MORROW AT 12:30."—Page 142

CHAPTER XXII

LOBBYISTS—AND ONE IN PARTICULAR

WASHINGTON has known many lobbyists in its time, and it keeps on knowing them. The striking increase in legislation that aims to restrict unlawful or improper practices in business, the awakening of the public conscience, has caused a greater demand than ever for influence at the national capital, for these restrictive measures must be either killed or emasculated to a point of uselessness by that process which is the salvation of many a corrupt manipulator, the process of amendment.

Predatory corporations, predatory business associations of different sorts and predatory individuals have their representatives on the field at Washington to ward off attack by any means that brains can devise or money procure and to obtain desired favors at a cost that will leave a profitable balance for the purchaser. When commercial tricksters, believing in the lobbyists' favorite maxim, "The People Forget," feel that they have outlived the latest reform movement and see "the good old days" returning, the professional politicians introduce a few reform measures themselves, most stringent measures. They push these measures ahead until somebody pays up, then the bills die. The lobbyist knows all about these "strike" bills, but does not frown on them. No, no. Per-

haps he helped draw up one of these bills so that, with the aid of his inside knowledge of his employer's business, the measure is made to give a greater scare than might otherwise have resulted. The bigger the scare the bigger the fund advanced, of course, for the lobbyist to handle. All this also helps the lobbyist to secure and retain employment.

Not all the Washington lobbyists are outside of Congress. The Senator or Congressman has unequaled facilities for oiling or blocking the course of a bill. Sometimes he confines himself to the interests of his own clients, whoever they may be. But sometimes he notices a bill that promises to be a pretty good thing for the client of some other member if it passes. Then he begins to fight this bill so actively that he must be "let in on the deal" himself. This is very annoying to the other member, but the experience is worth something. He has learned the value of observing other people's legislation.

The outsiders (members of the "third house") and the insiders have a bond of freemasonry uniting them; they exchange information as to what members of both houses can be "reached," how they can be "got to" (through whom) and how much they want. This information is carefully tabulated, and now prices for passing or defeating legislation can be quoted to interested parties just as the price of a carload of pork can be ascertained at a given time and place. Perhaps it is this system that leads grafting members of short experience to wonder how knowledge of their taking what is termed "the sugar" got out and became known to their associates. Did they not have pledge of absolute secrecy? Yes, but the purchaser never in-

tended to keep the information from those of his kind. Lobbyists must be honest with each other.

Not all lobbyists are men. The woman legislative agent has been known to occupy an important position in Washington, and she does yet. She is hard to detect and frequently more unprincipled than the men similarly engaged, if that is possible.

A woman with a measure of social standing would naturally prove the most successful as a lobbyist in Washington because of the opportunities her position would afford her to meet people of prominence. And just such a one was Mrs. Cora Spangler, with whom the Langdons had been thrown in contact quite intimately since their arrival at the capital.

Pretty and vivacious, Mrs. Spangler bore her thirty-seven years with uncommon ease, aided possibly by the makeup box and the modiste. Her dinners and receptions were attended by people of acknowledged standing. Always a lavish spender of money, this was explained as possible because of a fortune left her by her late husband, Congressman Spangler of Pennsylvania. That this "fortune" had consisted largely of stock and bonds of a bankrupt copper smelting plant in Michigan remained unknown, except to her husbad's family, one or two of her own relatives and Senator Peabody, who, coming from Pennsylvania, had known her husband intimately.

He it was who had suggested to her that she might make money easily by cultivating the acquaintance of the new members of both houses and their families, exerting her influence in various "perfectly legitimate ways," he argued, for or against matters pending in legislation. The Standard Steel corporation kept Mrs. Spangler well

supplied with funds deposited monthly to her account in a Philadelphia trust company.

She avoided suspicion by reason of her sex and her many acquaintances of undisputed rank. Senator Peabody was never invited to her home, had never attended a single dinner, reception or musicale she had given, all of which was a part of the policy they had mutually agreed on to deaden any suspicion that might some time arise as to her relation to the Standard Steel Company. It was well known that Peabody had been put into the Senate by Standard Steel to look after its interests.

He had found Mrs. Spangler chiefly valuable thus far as a source of information regarding the members of Congress, which she obtained largely from their families. He was thus able to gain an idea of their associations, their particular interests and their aspirations in coming to Congress, which proved of much use to him in forming and promoting acquaintances, all for the glory of Standard Steel.

Senator Holcomb of Missouri told Mrs. Spangler at an afternoon tea confidentially that he was going to vote against the ship subsidy bill. Senator Peabody was informed of this two hours later by a note written in cipher. When the vote was called two days later Senator Holcomb voted for the bill. Standard Steel supplies steel for ocean liners, and their building must be encouraged.

Mrs. Windsor, wife of Congressman Windsor of Indiana, remarked to Mrs. Spangler at a reception that she was "so glad Jimmie is going to do something for us women at last. He says we ought to get silk gowns ever so much cheaper next year." Jimmie Windsor was a member of the House committee on ways and means and was busily engaged

in the matter of tariff revision. When President Anders of the Federal Silk Company heard from Senator Peabody that Windsor favored lowering the tariff on silk a way was found to convince the Congressman that the American silk industry was a weakling, and many investors would suffer if the foreign goods should be admitted any cheaper than at present.

President Anders would be willing to do Senator Peabody a favor some day.

Sometimes Cora Spangler shuddered at the thought of what would become of her if she should make some slip, some fatal error, and be discovered to her friends as a betrayer of confidences for money. A secret agent of Standard Steel! What a newspaper story she would make—"Society Favorite a Paid Spy"; "Woman Lobbyist Flees Capital." The sensational headlines flitted through her mind. Then she would grit her teeth and dig her finger nails into her palms. She had to have money to carry on the life she loved so well. She must continue as she had begun. After all, she reasoned, nothing definite could ever be proved regarding the past. Let the future care for itself. She might marry again and free herself from this mode of life—who knows?

So reasoned Cora Spangler for the hundredth time during the last two years as she sat in her boudoir at her home. She had spent part of the day with Carolina and Hope Langdon and in the evening had attended the musicale at their house. But she had been forced to leave early owing to a severe headache. Now, after an hour or two of rest, she felt better and was about to retire. Suddenly the telephone bell rang at a writing-table near a window. She had two telephones, one in the lower

hall and one in her boudoir—to save walking downstairs unnecessarily, she explained to her woman friends. But the number of this upstairs telephone was not in the public book. It had a private number, known to but two people except herself.

Taking down the receiver, she asked in low voice, "Hello! Who is it?"

"Mr. Wall."

It was the name Senator Peabody used in telephone conversation with her.

"Yes, Congressman!" she responded.

She always said, "Yes, Congressman," in replying to "Mr. Wall," a prearranged manner of indicating that he was talking to the desired person.

"I will need your services to-morrow," Senator Peabody said, "on a very important matter, I am afraid. Decline any engagements and hold yourself in readiness."

"Yes."

"I may send my friend S. to explain things at 10:30 in the morning. If he does not arrive at that time, telephone me at 10:35 sharp. You know where. Understand? I have put off going to Philadelphia to-night."

"Yes."

"That is all; good-by."

"Something very important," she murmured nervously as she turned from the desk.

"I don't like his tone of voice; sounds strained and worried—something unusual for the cold, flinty gentleman from Pennsylvania. And his 'friend S.,' of course, means Stevens! Great heavens! then Stevens must now have knowledge of my—my—business!"

She calmed herself and straightened a dainty, slender finger against her cheek.

"It must be something about that naval base bill, I'm sure. That's been worrying Peabody all session," she mused as she pressed a button to summon her maid.

CHAPTER XXIII

"THE BOSS OF THE SENATE" GAINS A NEW ALLY

Mrs. Spangler would have flattered herself on guessing correctly as to Senator Peabody's uneasiness had she heard and seen all that had taken place in his apartment at the Louis Napoleon Hotel, where he had hurriedly taken Senator Stevens on leaving the Langdon house.

Not only would the two Senators lose their immense profits on the Altacoola transaction if Langdon persisted in his opposition, but they would lose as well the thousands of dollars spent by their agents in purchasing options on hundreds of acres, and where they could not get options, the land itself. This land would be on their hands, unsalable, if the base went somewhere else. Moreover, they feared that Langdon's revolt would bring unpleasant newspaper publicity to their operations.

"There's only one course to pursue, Stevens," snapped Peabody as they took off their overcoats. "That is to be prepared as best we can for the very worst and meet it in some way yet to be determined. But first we must try to figure out what Langdon is going to do—what it can be that he says he will tell us to-morrow at 12:30 if we appear. He must have something very startling up his sleeve if he makes good his assertions. I can't see how——"

"Nor I," frowned Stevens, "and my political eye-

sight is far better than that fool Langdon's. Under ordinary circumstances we could let him go ahead with his minority report for Gulf City, but as things stand he'll have every newspaper reporter in Washington buzzing around and asking impertinent questions——"

"Yes, and you and I would have to go to Paris to live with our life insurance friends from New York, wouldn't we?" laughed Peabody sarcastically. "I'm going to send for Jake Steinert," he added.

"Steinert?" Stevens ejaculated. "What——"

"Oh, that's all right. Maybe he can suggest something," said Peabody, going to the telephone. "We've too much at stake to make a mistake, and Jake may see a point that we've overlooked. Luckily I saw him downstairs in the grill-room as we came through to the elevator."

"Steinert is all right himself," continued Stevens, "but his methods——"

"Can't be too particular now about his methods —or ours, Stevens, when a bull like Langdon breaks loose in the political china shop. Fortune and reputation are both fragile."

A ring of a bell announced the arrival of Jake Steinert, whose reputation as a lobbyist of advanced ability had spread wide in the twenty years he had spent in Washington. Of medium height, sallow complexion, dark hair and dark eyes, his broad shoulders filled the doorway as he entered. An illy kept mustache almost hid a thin-lipped, forceful mouth, almost as forceful as some of the language he used. His eyes darted first to Peabody and then to Stevens, waiting for either of them to open the conversation.

The highest class lobbyists, those who "swing"

the "biggest deals," concern themselves only with men who can "handle" or who control lawmakers. They get regular reports and outline the campaign. Like crafty spiders they hide in the center of a great web, a web of bribery, threat, cajolery and intrigue, intent on every victim that is lured into the glistening meshes.

Only the small fry mingle freely with the legislators in the open, in the hotels and cafés and in the Capitol corridors.

Jake Steinert did not belong in either of these classes; he ranked somewhere between the biggest and the smallest. He coupled colossal boldness with the most expert knowledge of all the intricate workings of the congressional mechanism. Given money to spend among members to secure the defeat of a bill, he would frequently put most of the money in his own pocket and for a comparatively small sum defeat it by influencing the employees through whose hands it must pass.

"Sit down, Jake. Something to drink?" asked Peabody, reaching for a decanter.

"No," grunted the lobbyist; "don't drink durin' business hours; only durin' the day."

"Well, Jake," said the Pennsylvanian, "you probably know something of what's going on in the naval affairs committee."

"You mean the biggest job of the session?"

"Yes."

"Sure thing, Senator. It's the work of an artist."

"The boss of the Senate" smiled grimly.

"Now, suppose a committeeman named Langdon absolutely refused to be taken care of, and insisted on handing in a minority report to-morrow, with a speech that read like the Declaration of Independence?"

Steinert jerked his head forward quickly.

"You mean what would I do if I was—er—if I was runnin' the job?"

"Yes."

Steinert leaned toward Peabody.

"Where do I come in on this?" he asked, suspiciously.

"Come, come, man," was the irritable retort. "I never let a few dollars stand between myself and my friends."

"All right, Senator."

The lobbyist thrust himself down in his chair, puffed slowly at a cigar, and gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling.

"Few years ago," he began, after a minute or two, "there was a feller who was goin' to squeal about a bond issue. He had his speech all ready to warn the country that he thought a crowd of the plutocracy was goin' to get the bonds to resell to the public at advanced rates. Well, sir, I arranged to have a carriage, a closed carriage, call that night to take him to see the President, for he was told the President sent the carriage for him. When he got out he was at the insane asylum, an' I can tell you he was bundled into a padded cell in jig time, where he stayed for three days. 'He thinks he's a member of Congress,' I told the two huskies that handled him, an' gave 'em each a twenty-case note. The doctor that signed the necessary papers got considerable more."

Stevens' gasp of amazement caused the narrator genuine enjoyment.

"I know of a certain Senator who was drunk an' laid away in a Turkish bath when the roll was called on a certain bill. He was a friend of Peabody's," laughed the lobbyist to the Mississippian.

"But in this case," said Stevens, "we must be very careful. Possibly some of your methods in handling the men you go after——"

"Say," interposed Steinert, "you know I don't do all pursuin', all the goin' after, any more than others in my business. Why, Senator, some of these Congressmen worry the life out of us folks that sprinkle the sugar. They accuse us of not lettin' 'em in on things when they haven't been fed in some time. They come down the trail like greyhounds coursin' a coyote."

The speaker paused and glanced across at Peabody, who, however, was too busily engaged in writing in a memorandum book to notice him.

"Why, Senator Stevens," went on the lobbyist, "only to-day a Down East member held me up to tell me that he was strong for that proposition to give the A. K. and L. railroad grants of government timber land in Oregon. He says to me, he says: 'What'n h—l do my constituents in New England care about things 'way out on the Pacific Coast? I'd give 'em Yellowstone National Park for a freight sidin' if 'twas any use to 'em,' he says. So you see——"

"I must go," broke in Stevens, rising and glancing at his watch. "It will soon be daylight."

"If you must have sleep, go; but you must be here at 9 o'clock sharp in the morning," said Peabody. "Steinert will sleep here with me. We'll all have breakfast together here in my rooms and a final consultation."

"You won't plan anything really desperate, Peabody, will you? I think I'd rather——"

"Nonsense, Stevens, of course not. Our game will be to try to weaken Langdon, to prove to him in the morning that he alone will suffer, because

our names do not appear in the land deals. The options were signed and the deeds signed by our agents. Don't you see? Whereas his daughter and son and future son-in-law actually took land in their own names."

"How clumsy!"

"Yes. Such amateurism lowers the dignity of the United States Senate," Peabody answered, dryly.

"But suppose Langdon does not weaken?" asked Stevens, anxiously, as he picked up his hat and coat.

"Then we will go into action with our guns loaded," was the reply.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE HONEYBIRD

In the African jungle dwells a pretty little bird that lives on honey. The saccharine dainty is there found in the hollows of trees and under the bark, where what is known as the carpenter bee bores and deposits his extract from the buds and blossoms of the tropical forest.

The bird is called the "honeybird" because it is a sure guide to the deposits of the delicacy. The bird dislikes the laborious task of pecking its way through the bark to reach the honey, and so, wise in the ways of men, it procures help. It locates a nest of honey, then flies about until it sees some natives or hunters, to whom it shows itself. They know the honeybird and know that it will lead them to the treasure store. Following the bird, which flits just in advance, they reach the cache of dripping sweetness and readily lay it open with hatchets or knives. Taking what they want, there is always enough left clinging to the tree and easily accessible to satisfy the appetite of the clever little bird.

Senator Stevens of Mississippi bears a marked resemblance to the honeybird—so much so that he has well won the bird's appellation for himself. Abnormally keen at locating possibilities for extracting "honey" from the governmental affairs in Washington, he invariably led Peabody, representing the hunter with the ax, to the repository. He would

then rely on the Pennsylvanian's superior force to break down the barriers. Stevens would flutter about and gather up the leavings.

Equally as mercenary as "the boss of the Senate," he lacked Peabody's iron nerve, determination, resourcefulness and daring. He needed many hours of sleep. Peabody could work twenty hours at a stretch. He had to have his meals regularly or else suffer from indigestion. Peabody sometimes did a day's work on two boiled eggs and a cup of coffee.

The senior Senator from Mississippi had been the first to point out to Peabody the possibilities for profit in the gulf naval base project, but the morning following the conference with Steinert when he rejoined them for breakfast at the Louis Napoleon he was far from comfortable. He did not mind fighting brain against brain, even though unprincipled methods were resorted to, but indications were that more violent agencies would be called into play owing to the complications that had arisen.

Stevens ate heartily to strengthen his courage. Steinert ate hugely to strengthen his body. Peabody ate scarcely anything at all—to strengthen his brain.

Waving away the hotel waiter who had brought the breakfast to his apartment, Senator Peabody outlined the probable campaign of the day.

"If our best efforts to weaken and scare off Langdon fail to-day," he said, "it will naturally develop that we must render it impossible in some way for him to appear in the Senate at all, or we must delay his arrival until after the report of the committee on naval affairs has been made. In either event he would not have another opportunity to speak on that subject.

"Of course, later, at 12:30, we will know his plan

of action. Then we can act to the very point, but we must be prepared for any situation that can arise."

"Cannot the President of the Senate be persuaded not to recognize Langdon on the floor? Then we could adjourn and shut him off," asked Stevens.

"No," responded Peabody; "he has already promised Langdon to recognize him, and the President of the Senate cannot be persuaded to break his word. I am painfully aware of this fact."

But Stevens was not yet dissuaded from the hope of defeating the junior Senator from Mississippi by wit alone.

"Can we not have a speaker get the floor before Langdon and have him talk for hours—tire out the old kicker—and await a time when he leaves the Senate chamber to eat or talk to some visitor we could have call on him, then shove the bill through summarily?" he suggested.

"I've gone over all that," answered Peabody, quickly. "It would only be delaying the evil hour. You wouldn't be able to move that old codger away from the Senate chamber with a team of oxen—once he gets to his seat. His secretary, Haines—another oversight of yours, Stevens"—the latter winced—"will warn him. Langdon would stick pins through his eyelids to keep from falling asleep."

"I've been thinkin'," put in Steinert, slowly, "that a little fine-esse like this might keep him away: When Langdon's in his committee room before goin' to the Senate send him a telegram signed by one of his frien's' name that one of his daughters is dyin' from injuries in a automobile collision a few miles out o' town. That 'ud——"

"Ridiculous," snorted Peabody. "He'd know where they were. They're always——"

"Huh! then put in more fine-esse."

"How? What?"

"Hev some 'un take 'em out a-autoin'——"

"No, no, man!" snapped Peabody. "They'd stick in town to hear their father's wonderful speech."

"Well," went on the lobbyist, "I'll hev Langd'n watched by a careful picked man, a nigger that won't talk. He'll pick a row with the Colonel on some street, say, w'en he's comin' from his home after lunch. The coon kin bump into Langd'n an' call him names. Then w'en ole fireworks sails into 'im, yellin' about what 'e'd do in Mississippi, the coon pulls a gun on the Colonel an' fires a couple o' shots random. Cops come up, an' our pertickeler copper'll lug Langd'n away as a witness, refusin' to believe 'e's a Senator. I kin arrange to hev him kept in the cooler a couple o' hours without gettin' any word out, or I'll hev 'im entered up as drunk an' disorderly. He'll look drunk, he'll be so mad."

"But the negro—how could you get a man to undergo arrest on such a serious charge, attempted murder!" exclaimed Stevens.

"There, there," said Steinert, patronizingly; "coons has more genteel home life in jail than they does out. An' don't forget the District of Columbia is governed by folks that ain't residents of it, only durin' the session. Th' politicians don't leave their frien's in the cooler very long. Say, Senator Stevens, are you kiddin' me? Is it any different down in your——"

The Mississippian choked and spluttered over a gulp of unusually hot coffee, and Peabody again decided Steinert to be on the wrong tack.

"That proceeding would attract too much attention from the newspapers," he added.

"Well, I thought you wanted to win," grunted Steinert. "I've been offerin' you good stuff, too—new stuff. None of yer druggin' with chloroform or ticklin' with blackjacks. Why, I've gone from fine-esse to common sense. But, come to think of it, how about some woman? I c'n get one to introduce to——"

"This is the wrong kind of a man," interrupted Peabody.

"Unless you got the right kind of a woman," went on Steinert.

Senator Stevens choked some more.

"The boss of the Senate" sank down in his chair, crossed one knee over the other and drummed his fingers lightly on the table. He gazed thoughtfully at Stevens.

"Yes," he observed, slowly, "unless you've got the right sort of a woman."

Rising, he led the Mississippian to one side.

The lobbyist heard the Southerner give a short exclamation of astonishment as Peabody whispered to him.

"It's all right. It's all right," he then heard the Pennsylvanian say, irritably. "She'll understand. She can be trusted. *She expects you.*"

Stevens gave a violent start at the last assurance, but his colleague hurriedly helped him into his coat.

"Go in a closed carriage," was Peabody's final warning. "Be sure to tell her to get hold of his two daughters on some pretext at once. She knows them well. Maybe we can influence the old man through his girls, don't you see?"

And while Senator Peabody and Jake Steinert recurred to a previous discussion concerning one J. D.

Telfer, Mayor of Gulf City, Senator Stevens started on the most memorable drive of his career on this bright winter morning, to the house of the fascinating Mrs. Spangler—who for the past week had been considering his proposal of marriage.

CHAPTER XXV

CAROLINA LANGDON'S RENUNCIATION

Senator Langdon's committe room at the Capitol presented a busy scene at an unusually early hour the morning after the entertainment at his home. Bud Haines, reinstated as secretary, was picking up the thread of routine where he had dropped it the day before, though his frequent thought of Hope and the words that had thrilled him—"I love you, I love you fondly"—made this task unusually difficult. He impatiently wished the afternoon to hasten along, as he knew he would then see her in the Senate gallery, where she would go to hear her father's speech.

This speech had to be revised in some particulars by Bud, and the work he knew would take up much of the morning. The Senator's speech was "The South of the Future," which he would deliver when recognized by the President of the Senate in connection with the naval base bill, that officer having agreed to recognize Langdon at 3:30, at which time the report of the naval affairs committee would be received. Just how Langdon would turn the tables on Peabody and Stevens and yet win for the Altacoola site not even the ex-newspaper man, experienced in politics, had solved. Clearly the Senator would have to do some tall thinking during the morning.

The junior Senator from Mississippi burst into the office with his habitual cheery greeting, his broad-brimmed black felt hat in its usual position on the back of his head, like a symbol of undying defiance.

"A busy day for us, eh, Senator?" queried Bud.

"Now, look here, my boy, don't begin to remind me of work right off," he said, with a humorous gleam in his eye. "Go easy on me. Don't forget I'm her father."

Bud laughed through the flush that rose in his cheeks.

"No, I won't forget that. But have you decided what to tell Peabody and Stevens as your plan of action if they come in here at 12:30?"

"If they come?" exclaimed Langdon. "They'll come. Watch 'em."

Then he hesitated, worriedly.

"I'll have to incubate an idea between now and noon, somehow. But don't forget this, Bud—we're worried about them, true enough, but they're worried a heap more about us."

Senator Langdon stepped into an adjoining room, where he could be alone, to "incubate."

As Haines resumed his work Carolina Langdon entered.

Avoiding the secretary's direct gaze, she asked for her father.

"He ought to be back shortly, Miss Langdon," responded Haines. "You can wait here. I must ask pardon for leaving, as I must run over to the library."

As the secretary bowed himself out of the door he almost collided with Congressman Norton. Both glared at each other and remained silent.

"Carolina," spoke Norton, as he entered, "I hope

—I know you won't allow your father to influence you against me—because of last night. I——"

Carolina would rather not have met Charles Norton on this morning. She had hardly slept for the night. She had fought a battle with herself. Her father had shown her plainly the mistake she had made. She saw that her influence had not been without effect on Randolph. Probably for the first time she realized that there are glory and luxury, pleasure and prestige for which too big a price can be paid.

The Senator's daughter turned slowly and faced the man she had promised to marry.

"Charlie, I have come to a decision. I came here to talk with father about it."

Norton started toward Carolina, a look of apprehension on his face. He gathered from the trend of her words and her demeanor that she had turned against him.

"You couldn't be so cruel, Carolina," he protested.

"Charlie," she went on, determinedly, "I will always cherish our friendship, our happy younger days down in Mississippi, but I must give up thinking of you as my future husband. We've both made a mistake, mine probably greater than yours, but I now am convinced that I should not marry you. Your way of thinking about life is all wrong, and you are too deeply entangled with the dishonest men in Washington to draw back. I cannot love you."

"But I am doing it all for your sake, Carolina. Don't let an old-fashioned father come between a man and a woman and their love," he cried.

"Charlie, I must give you up."

The girl turned to one side, as though to give Norton a chance to leave.

He looked at her in silence for a moment or two. Then a change came into his bearing. Wrinkling his face into a sneer, he stepped before the girl.

"You've been converted mighty sudden, I reckon, from land speculating to preaching—and preaching, too, against folks who tried to make a fortune for you."

Norton stopped, expecting a reply, but the girl remained silent.

"You think I'm done for, that I've lost my money; that's why you turned from me so quickly," he laughed, scornfully. "But I'll show you, you and your blundering old father. I'll win you yet, and I'll ruin your father's political reputation. I'll——"

"Are you qite sure about that?" spoke a voice, sharply, behind the Congressman. He swung around vigorously. Bud Haines had returned in time to hear Norton's threat.

"Yes; and while I'm doing that I'll take time to show you up, too, somehow. I guess a Congressman's word will count against that of a cheap secretary—that's what Miss Langdon said you were."

Carolina looked appealingly to Haines to rid her of the presence of this man, whose last words she knew Haines would not believe.

But Norton had had his say. He retreated to the door.

"Miss Langdon," he cried, as he backed out and away, "you have an idea that I am dishonest, but kindly remember that, whatever you think I am, I never was a hypocrite."

Haines advanced and procured a chair for Miss Langdon.

"I'm very sorry to have come back at such a time," he began.

The girl cut him short with a gesture.

"I want to say to you," she said, then halted—"that I want to be friends with you. I want you to forget the happenings of yesterday—last evening—so far as I was concerned in them. I want to work together with you and father—and so does Randolph. Father and you are standing together to uphold the honor of the Langdons of Mississippi, and Randolph and I, no matter the cost of our former folly, want to share in that work."

Before Haines could reply Senator Langdon burst into the room.

"Bud! Bud!" he cried, "I've got it! I've got it!"

"You've got what, Senator?" exclaimed the secretary.

"That idea, my boy, that idea! It's incubated all right, and Peabody and Stevens can come just as soon as they want to."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BATTLES OF WASHINGTON

At twenty minutes after 12 Senator Langdon and Secretary Haines were still undisturbed by any move on the part of Peabody and Stevens, who maintained a silence that to Haines was distinctly ominous. His experience at the Capitol had taught him that when the Senate machine was quiet it was time for some one to get out from under.

Miss Williams, the naval committee's stenographer, entered.

"Senator Langdon," she said, "Senator Peabody and Senator Stevens are in committee room 6, and they told me to tell you that they'd be—— I can't say it. Please, sir, I——"

"D—d," interpolated Langdon, laughing.

"Yes, sir, that's it. They'll be—that—if they come in here at 12:30. You must come to them, they say."

"Tell the gentlemen I'm sitting here with my hat on the back of my head, smoking a good see-gar, with nails driven through both shoes into the floor—and looking at the clock."

At 12:25 Senator Stevens entered.

"I came to warn you, Langdon," he said, "that Senator Peabody's patience is nearly exhausted. You must come to see him at once if you expect the South to get a naval base at Altacoola or anywhere

else. If you do not agree to take his advice this naval bill and any other that you are interested in now or in future will be trampled underfoot in the Senate. Mississippi will have no use for a Senator who cannot produce results in Washington, and that will prove the bitterest lesson you have ever learned."

"I'm waiting for Peabody here, Stevens."

"Oh, ridiculous! Of course he's not coming. Why, Langdon, he's the king of the Senate. He has the biggest men of the country at his call. He's——"

"He's got one minute left," observed Langdon, looking at the clock, "but he'll come. I trust Peabody more than the best clock made at a time like this, when——"

The figure of the senior Senator from Pennsylvania appeared in the doorway.

"Good-day, Senator Langdon," he remarked, icily.

"Same to you. Have a see-gar, Senator?" said Langdon. He turned and winked significantly at Haines.

The three Senators seated themselves.

"I suppose you wouldn't consider yourself so important, Langdon, if you knew that we now find we can get another member of the naval affairs committee over to our side for Altacoola?" began Peabody. "That gives us a majority of the committee without your vote."

"That wouldn't prevent me from making a minority report for Gulf City and explaining why I made that report, would it?" the Mississippian asked, blandly.

Peabody and Stevens both knew that it wouldn't. Stevens exchanged glances with "the boss of the Senate," and in low voice began making to Lang-

don a proposition to which Peabody's assent had been gained.

"Langdon, we would like to be alone," and he nodded toward Haines.

"Sorry can't oblige, Senator," Langdon replied. "Bud and I together make up the Senator from Mississippi."

"All right. What I want to say is this: The President is appointing a commission to investigate the condition of the unemployed. The members are to go to Europe, five or six countries, and look into conditions there, leisurely, of course, so as to formulate a piece of legislation that will solve the existing problems in this country. A most generous expense account will be allowed by the Government. A member can take his family. A son, for instance, could act as financial secretary under liberal pay."

"I've heard of that commission," said Langdon.

"Well, Senator Peabody has the naming of two Senators who will go on that commission, and I suggested that your character and ability would make you——"

"Good glory!" exclaimed Langdon. "You mean that my character and ability would make me something or other if I kept my mouth shut in the Senate this afternoon! Stevens, I've been surprised so many times since I came to the capital that it doesn't affect me any more. I'm just amused at your offer or Senator Peabody's.

"I want to tell you two Senators that there's only one thing that I want in Washington—and you haven't offered it to me yet. When you do I'll do business with you."

"What's that? Speak out, man!" said Peabody, quickly.

"A square deal for the people of the United States."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed "the boss of the Senate." "Is this Washington or is it heaven?"

"It is not heaven, Senator," put in Haines.

"Man alive!" cried Peabody, "I've been in Washington so long that——"

"So long that you've forgotten that the American people really exist," retorted Langdon; "and there are more like you in the Senate, all because the voters have no chance to choose their own Senators. The public in most States have to take the kind of a Senator that the Legislature, made up mostly of politicians, feels like making them take. You, Peabody, wouldn't be in the Senate to-day if the voters had anything to say about it."

The Pennsylvanian shrugged his shoulders.

"And now I'll tell you honorable Senators," went on Langdon, thoroughly aroused, "something to surprise you. I have discovered that you were not working for yourselves alone in the Altacoola deal, but that you intend to turn your land over to the Standard Steel Company at a big profit as soon as this naval base bill is passed. Then that company will squeeze the Government for the best part of the hundred millions that are to be spent."

The Senator sank back in his chair and gazed at his two opponents.

Those two statesmen jumped to their feet.

"Come, Stevens, let him do what he will. We cannot stay here to be insulted by the ravings of a madman," cried the Pennsylvanian. But he brought his associate to a standstill midway to the door. "By the way, Langdon, what is it you are going to do in the Senate this afternoon?" he asked.

"You said you were going to make us honest against our will. You know you can't do anything."

Bud Haines turned his face toward the speaker and grinned broadly, to the Senator's intense discomfort.

"I'll do more than that," announced Langdon, rising and pounding a fist into his open hand. "I'll make you and Stevens more popular than you ever were in your lives before."

"Bah!" shouted Peabody.

"I'll do even more yet. I'm going to make you generous—patriots. And, I regret to say, I'll give you the chance to make the hits of your careers."

The polished hypocrites looked at him, too astonished to move.

"How? What?" they gasped.

Swept on by his own enthusiasm and the force of his own courageous honesty, the voice of the Southerner rose to oratorical height.

"This afternoon," he exclaimed, "when the naval base committee makes its report, I will rise in my place and declare that for once in the history of the Senate men have been found who place the interests of the Government they serve above any chance of pecuniary reward. These men are the members of the naval base committee.

"With this idea in view, realizing that dishonest men would try to make money out of the Government, these members of the naval base committee, after they settled on Altacoola, went out quietly and secured control of all the land that will be needed for the naval base, and these men secured this at a very nominal figure. Now they are ready to turn over their land to the Government at exactly what they paid for it, without a cent of profit.

"Then they're going to sit up over there in that

Senate. They're going to realize that a new kind of politics has arrived in Washington—the kind that I and lots of others always thought there was here.

"And, gentlemen"—he advanced on his colleagues triumphantly—"when I, Senator Langdon of Mississippi, your creation in politics, have finished that speech, I dare one of you to get up and deny a word!"

"The boss of the Senate" and his satellite were dumfounded. Firmly believing that Langdon could find no way to pass the bill for Altacoola and yet spoil their crooked scheme, they were totally unprepared for any such dénoûment. To think that a simple, old-fashioned planter from the cotton fields of Mississippi could originate such a plan to outwit the two abiest political tricksters in the Senate!

Langdon eyed his colleagues triumphantly.

Peabody, however, was thinking quickly. He was never beaten until the last vote was counted on a roll call. He knew that, no matter how apparently insurmountable an opposition was, a way to overcome it might often be found by the man who exercises strong self-control and a trained brain. This corrupt victor in scores of bitter political engagements on the battlefield of Washington was now in his most dangerous mood. He would marshal all his forces. The man to defeat him now must defeat the entire Senate machine and the allies it could gain in an emergency; he must overcome the power of Standard Steel; he must fight the resourceful brain of the masterful Peabody himself.

Peabody whispered to Stevens, "We must pretend to be beaten."

"'AFTER I HAVE FINISHED I DARE ONE OF YOU TO DENY A WORD!''—Page 172.

Then the Pennsylvanian advanced, smiling, to Langdon and held out his hand.

"Senator Langdon," he said, "I'm beaten. You've beaten the leader of the Senate, something difficult to believe. What's more, you've given me the chance of a lifetime to become known as a public benefactor. As soon as you've finished your speech in the Senate I will get up and make another one—to second yours. Here's my hand. Anything you may ever want out of Peabody in the future shall be yours for the asking."

Langdon refused to grasp the proffered hand.

Senator Stevens made a show of protesting against his superior's seeming surrender.

"But," he objected, "look here——"

Peabody turned upon him instantly.

"Oh, shut up, Stevens; don't be a fool. Come on in. The water's fine."

The pair of schemers, with Norton at their heels, turned away.

The Pennsylvanian drew Stevens into committee room 6 and, ordering the stenographer to leave, drew up chairs where both could sit, facing the door.

"We've thrown dust in that old gander's eyes," whispered Peabody. "It's now ten after 1. He is to be recognized to make his speech at 3:30. That gives us two hours and twenty minutes——"

"Yes, but for what?" asked Stevens, excitedly. "I've been trying myself to think of something. What will you do—what *can* you do?"

"The boss of the Senate" smiled patronizingly on the senior Senator from Mississippi, as though amused and scornful of his limitations as a strategist, as a tenacious fighter. Then his jaw set hard, and his brows contracted.

"I will not do anything. I cannot do anything" —he hesitated a full ten seconds—"but Jake Steinert can."

Stevens' hands twitched nervously.

"And," continued Peabody, "I'm expecting a 'phone call from him any moment. I told him this morning that he might be able to make $1,000 before night if——"

The telephone bell at the desk interrupted him.

Peabody leaned over and eagerly clutched the receiver.

The senior Senator from Mississippi jerked himself to his feet. He stood at a window and looked out over the roof tops of the city.

CHAPTER XXVII

MRS. SPANGLER GIVES A LUNCHEON

When Senators Peabody and Stevens had gone Langdon and Bud went over the situation together and concluded that their opponents had no means of defeating Langdon's program—that, after all, Peabody might really have meant his words of surrender.

"But they might try foul play. Better stay right here in the Capitol the rest of the day," suggested Bud.

Langdon scoffed at the idea.

Haines bustled away to get a few mouthfuls of lunch to fortify himself for a busy afternoon—one that was going to be far busier than he imagined.

The telephone bell rang at the Senator's desk. It was Mrs. Spangler's voice that spoke.

"Senator Langdon," she said, "Carolina and Hope Georgia are here at my home for luncheon, and we all want you to join us."

"Sorry I cannot accept," answered the Mississippian, "but I am to make an important speech this afternoon——"

"Oh, yes, I know. The girls and I are coming to hear it. But you have two hours' time, and if you come we can all go over to the Senate together. Now, Senator, humor us a little. Don't disappoint the girls and me. We can all drive over to the Capitol in my carriage."

The planter hesitated, then replied: "All right. I'll be over, but it mustn't be a very long luncheon."

"Gone to eat; back by 3 o'clock," he scratched quickly on a pad on the secretary's desk, and departed.

Mrs. Spangler's luncheons were equally as popular in Washington as Senator Langdon's dinners. The Mississippian and his daughters enjoyed the delicacies spread lavishly before them.

Time passed quickly. The old planter enjoyed seeing his daughters have so happy a time, and he was not insensible to the charm of his hostess' conversation, for Mrs. Spangler had studied carefully the art of ingratiating herself with her guests.

Suddenly realizing that he had probably reached the limit of the time he could spare, the Senator drew out his watch.

"What a stunning fob you wear," quickly spoke Mrs. Spangler, reaching out her hand and taking the watch from her guest's hands as the case snapped open.

"Oh, that's Carolina's doings," laughed Langdon. "She said the old gold chain that my grandfather left me was——"

"Why, how lovely," murmured Mrs. Spangler, glancing at the watch. "We have plenty of time yet. Won't have to hurry. Your time is the same as mine," she added, nodding her head toward a French renaissance clock on the black marble mantel.

As the hostess did this she deftly turned back the hands of the Senator's watch thirty-five minutes.

"Do you care to smoke, Senator," Mrs. Spangler asked, as her guests concluded their repast, "if the young ladies do not object?"

Langdon inclined his head gratefully, and laughed.

"They wouldn't be Southern girls, I reckon, if they didn't want to see a man have everything to make him happy—er, I beg pardon, Mrs. Spangler, I mean, comfortable. Nobody that's your guest could be unhappy."

The hostess beamed on the chivalrous Southerner.

Langdon drew forth a thick black perfecto and settled back luxuriously in his chair, after another glance at Mrs. Spangler's clock. He was absorbed in a mental résumé of his forthcoming speech and did not hear the next words of the woman, addressed pointedly to his daughters.

"Do you know, really, why this luncheon was given to-day?" she queried. Then she continued before Carolina and Hope Georgia could formulate replies:

"Because your father and I wanted to take this opportunity to announce to you—our engagement."

The speaker smiled her sweetest smile.

The two girls gazed at each other in uncontrollable amazement, then at Mrs. Spangler, then at their father, who had turned partly away from the table and was gazing abstractedly at the ceiling.

Hope Georgia was the first to regain her voice.

"Oh, Mrs. Spangler," she ejaculated, "you are very kind to marry father, but——"

"What's that?" exclaimed the Senator, roused from his thoughts by his youngest daughter's words and thrusting himself forward.

Mrs. Spangler laid her hand on his arm.

"Oh, Senator, I have just told the dear girls that you had asked me to marry you—that we were soon to be married," she said, archly, looking him

straight in the eye. She clasped her hands and murmured: "I am so happy!"

The hero of Crawfordsville tried to speak, but he could not. He stared at his hostess, who smiled the smile of the budding débutante. His own open-mouthed astonishment was reflected in the faces of Carolina and Hope Georgia as they observed their father's expression. He forgot he was in Washington. He did not know he was a Senator. The fact that he had ever even thought of making a speech was furthest from his mind.

What did it all mean? Had Mrs. Spangler gone suddenly insane? His daughters—what did they think? These thoughts surged through his flustered brain. Then it flashed over him—she was joking in some new fashionable way. He turned toward the fair widow to laugh, but her face was losing its smile. A pained expression, a suggestion of intense suffering, appeared in her face.

"Why do you so hestitate, Senator Langdon?" she finally asked in low voice, just loud enough for the two girls to overhear.

The junior Senator from Mississippi looked at his hostess. She had entertained him and had done much for his daughters in Washington. She was alone in the world—a widow. He felt that he could not shame her before Carolina and Hope Georgia. His Southern chivalry would not permit that. Then, too, she was a most charming person, and the thought, "Why not—why not take her at her word?" crept into his mind.

"Yes, father, why do you hesitate?" asked Carolina.

Senator Langdon mustered his voice into service at last.

"I've been thinking," he said, slowly, "that——"

"That your daughters did not know," interrupted Mrs. Spangler, "of our——"

"The telephone—upstairs—is ringing, madam," said a maid who had entered to Mrs. Spangler.

The adventuress could not leave the Senator and his daughters alone, though she knew it must be Peabody calling her. At any moment he might remember his speech and leave. Already late, he would still be later, though, because he would have no carriage—hers would purposely be delayed.

"Tell the person speaking that you are empowered to bring me any message—that I cannot leave the dining-hall," she said to the maid.

To gain time and to hold the Senator's attention, Mrs. Spangler asked, slowly:

"Well, Senator, what was it that you were going to say when I interrupted you a few moments ago?"

Langdon had been racking his brain for some inspiration that would enable him to save the feelings of his hostess, and yet indicate his position clearly. He would not commit himself in any way. He would jump up and pronounce her an impostor first.

After a moment of silence his clouded face cleared.

"Mrs. Spangler," he began, "your announcement to-day I have considered to be——"

"Premature," she suggested.

The maid returned.

"Mr. Wall says Senator Langdon is wanted at once at the Capitol."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Langdon, springing to his feet and glancing at the clock. "I'm late! I'm late! I hope to God I'm not too late!"

"Mr. Wall says a carriage is coming for Senator Langdon," concluded the maid.

"We must talk this matter over some other time, Mrs. Spangler," the Mississippian cried, as he sent a servant for his hat and coat. "I hope that carriage hurries, else I'll try it on the run for the Capitol!"

"It's a half hour away on foot," said Mrs. Spangler. "Better wait. You'll save time."

But to herself she muttered, as though mystified:

"I wonder why Peabody changed his mind so suddenly? Why should he now want the old fool at the Capitol?"

The rumble of wheels was heard outside.

"Hurry, father!" cried Hope Georgia.

The Senator hurried down the stone steps of Mrs. Spangler's residence as rapidly as his weight and the excitement under which he labored would permit. Opening the coach door, he plunged inside—to come face to face with Bud Haines, who had huddled down in a corner to avoid observance from the Spangler windows. The driver started his horses off on a run.

Struggling to regain his breath, the Senator cried:

"Well, what are——"

"Never mind now. But first gather in all I say, Senator, as we've no time to lose. When I couldn't locate you and I saw you probably wouldn't be at the Senate chamber in time to make your speech on the naval base bill, I persuaded Senator Milbank of Arkansas to rise and make a speech on the currency question, which subject was in order. He was under obligation to me for some important information I once obtained for him, and he consented to keep the floor until you arrived, though he knew he would earn the vengeance of Peabody. That was over an hour and a half ago. He must be read-

ing quotations from 'Pilgrim's Progress' to the Senate by now to keep the floor."

Bud paused to look at his watch.

The Senator stretched his head out of the window and cried: "Drive faster!"

"Got your speech all right?" called Bud above the din of the rattling wheels.

"Yes, here," was the response, the Senator tapping his inner breast pocket.

"Thought maybe she——" cried Bud, jerking his head back in the direction from which they had come.

The Mississippian shook his head negatively, and set his jaws determinedly.

The coach swung up to the Capitol entrance.

"Tell me," asked Langdon, as both jumped out, "how did you find out that——"

"I 'phoned the house—gave a name Peabody uses——"

"Great heavens! but how did you know where to 'phone?"

They were at the door of the Senate chamber.

"Norton gave me the tip—for your sake and Carolina's—for old times' sake, he said," was Bud's reply.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ON THE FLOOR OF THE SENATE

TOO MUCH occupied in concentrating his thoughts on his speech, Langdon failed to notice the consternation on the faces of Peabody and Stevens as he walked to his seat in the Senate. They had failed to succeed in getting Milbank to conclude, and consequently could not push the naval base report through. But they noted the passing of over an hour after their opponent's appointed time and had felt certain that he would not appear at all.

"The boss of the Senate" leaned across to Stevens and whispered, hurriedly:

"We must tear him to pieces now—discredit him publicly. It's his own fault. Our agents can sell the land to Standard Steel. Our connection with the scheme will be impossible to discover—after we have made the public believe Langdon is a crook."

"But how about our supposed combination to protect the Government that Langdon will tell about?" asked Stevens. "We can't deny that, of course."

"No," answered Peabody. "We can't deny it, but we will not affirm it. We will tell interviewers that we prefer not to talk about it."

"It's our only chance," replied Stevens, cautiously.

"Yes; and we owe it all to Jake Steinert," went on Peabody. "That fellow Telfer will do anything to please Jake. Jake has convinced Telfer that

Langdon was responsible for the defeat of Gulf City, and the Mayor is wild for revenge."

"The boss of the Senate" rose and walked to the rear of the Senate chamber to issue orders to two of his colleagues.

"Report of the committee on naval affairs," droned the clerk, mechanically. "House Bill No. 1,109 is amended to read as follows——" And his voice sank to an unintelligible mumble, for every Senator present he well knew was aware that the amendment named Altacoola as the naval base site.

Senator Langdon rose in his seat.

"Mr. President," he called.

"Chair recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi," said the presiding officer, as he leaned back to speak to Senator Winans of Kansas, who had approached to the side of the rostrum.

The Langdon speech on "The New South and the South of the Future" proved more than a document suited only to a reverent burial in the *Congressional Record*. Although wearied at the start owing to the exciting happenings of the day, the Mississippian's enthusiasm for his cause gave him strength and stimulation as he progressed. His voice rose majestically as he came to the particular points he wished to accentuate, and even those in the uppermost rows in the galleries could hear every word.

At the close of his formal speech he began on his statement of the action of the naval affairs committee in buying control of the Altacoola land to foil attempts to rob the Government. As he had predicted, the Senate did "sit up." The Senate did agree that a new kind of politics had arrived.

During this latter part of the speech many curious glances were directed at Peabody and Stevens, who sat in the same tier of seats, in the mid-

dle of the chamber, only an aisle separating them. Through this choice of seats they could confer without leaving their places. Various senatorial associates of these two men in other deals found it difficult to believe their ears—but was not old Langdon at this moment narrating the amazing transaction on the floor of the Senate? Would the statue on the pedestal step down? Would the sphinx of the desert speak the story of the lost centuries? Would honor take the place of expediency in the affairs of state? What might not happen, thought the Senate machine, now that Peabody and Stevens had taken to their bosoms what they termed the purple pup of political purity?

Neither did the full portent of the situation escape the attention of the reporters' gallery. Dick Cullen observed to Hansel of the *Record:*

"Virtue's getting so thick around here it's a menace to navigation."

"Blocking the traffic, eh?" queried Hansel; and both laughed.

"Hello! What's this?" exclaimed Cullen a few minutes later. "Horton has been recognized, when the program was to adjourn when the naval base bill was over with."

Langdon's speech had proved the hit, the sensation of the session. After he concluded, amid resounding applause, in which Senators joined, as well as occupants of the galleries, Senator Horton of Montana rose and caught the presiding officer's eye.

"I ask unanimous consent to offer a resolution."

Hearing no objection, he continued, in a manner that instantly attracted unusual attention:

"It is my unpleasant duty"—Peabody and Stevens exchanged glances—"to place a matter before

this body that to me, as a member of this honorable body, is not only distasteful, but deeply to be regretted.

"There has arisen ground to suspect a member of this body with having endeavored to make money at the Government's expense out of land which he is alleged to have desired his own committee to choose as the naval base.

"I therefore offer this resolution providing for the appointment of an investigating committee to look into these charges."

Langdon was intensely excited over this new development. "Some one has learned something about Peabody or Stevens," he muttered. He feared that this new complication might in some way affect the fate of the naval base—that the South, and Mississippi, might lose it. He rose slowly in his seat, while the Senate hummed with the murmur of suppressed voices.

"I ask for more definite information," he began, when recognized and after the President of the Senate had pounded with the gavel to restore quiet, "so that this house can consider this important matter more intelligently."

Senator Horton rose. He said:

"I will take the liberty of adding that the Senator accused is none other than the junior Senator from Mississippi."

Langdon's eyes blazed. He strode swiftly into the aisle.

"Mr. President," he cried, passionately, "I know this is not the time or place for a discussion like this, but ask that senatorial courtesy permit me to ask"—then he concluded strongly before he could be stopped—"what is the evidence in support of this preposterous charge?"

"This is all out of order," said the presiding officer, after a pause, "but in view of the circumstances I will entertain a motion to suspend the rules."

This motion passing, Horton replied to Langdon:

"Your name is signed to a contract with J. D. Telfer, Mayor of Gulf City, Miss., calling for 3,000 shares in the Gulf City Land Company, and——"

"A lie! a lie!" screamed Langdon.

"That official," went on Horton, coolly, "is now in Washington. He has the contract and will swear to conversations with you and your secretary. His testimony will be corroborated by no less a personage than Congressman Norton, of your own district, who says you asked him to conduct part of the negotiations.

"And I might add," cried Horton, "that it is known to more than one member of this honorable body that you had drawn up a minority report in favor of Gulf City because of your anger at the defeat of your plan to take the naval base away from Altacoola."

Langdon sank into his chair, bewildered, even stunned. There was a conspiracy against him, but how could he prove it? The ground seemed crumbling from under him—not even a straw to grasp. Then the old fighting blood that carried him along in Beauregard's van tugged at the valves of his heart, revived his spirit, ran through his veins. He leaped to his feet.

A sound as of a scuffle—a body falling heavily—drew all eyes from Langdon to the rear of the main aisle. An assistant sergeant-at-arms was lying face downward on the carpet. Another was vainly trying to hold Bud Haines, who, tearing himself free, rushed down to his chief, waving a sheet of paper in the Senator's eyes.

"Read that!" gasped the secretary, breathlessly, and he hurried away up a side passageway and out to reach the stairs leading to the press gallery.

Langdon spread the paper before him with difficulty with his trembling hands. Slowly his whirling brain gave him the ability to read. Slowly what appeared to him as a jumbled nothing resolved into orderly lines and words. He read and again stood before the Senate, which had regained its usual composure after the fallen sergeant-at-arms had regained his feet and rubbed his bruises.

"I do not think there will be any investigation," he said, with decided effort, struggling to down the emotion that choked him. "I ask this house to listen to the following letter:

"DEAR SENATOR LANGDON: When you receive this letter I shall be well on my way to take a steamer for Cuba. I write to ask you not to think too harshly of me, for I will always cherish thoughts of the friendship you have shown me.

"Peabody and Stevens have finally proved too much for me. When they got old Telfer to swear to a forged contract and wanted me to forge your name in the land records at Gulf City, I threw up my hands. Their game will always go on, I suppose, but you gave them a shock when you broke up their Altacoola graft scheme. And I'm glad you did They cast me aside to-day, probably thinking they could get me again if they needed me.

"I am going on the sugar plantation of a friend, where I can make a new start and forget that I ever went to Washington."

Langdon paused deliberately. The Senate was hushed. The galleries were stifled. Not even the

rustle of a sheet of paper was heard in the reporters' gallery. The Mississippian gazed around the Senate chamber. He saw Stevens and Peabody craning their necks across the aisle and talking excitedly to each other.

Then he stepped forward and spoke, waving the paper in the air.

"This letter is signed 'Charles Norton.'"

The old Southerner gazed triumphantly at the men who had sought to destroy him. It was with difficulty that the presiding officer could hammer down the burst of handclapping that arose from the galleries.

Senator Horton, however, was not satisfied with Langdon's sudden ascendency.

"How do we know that that letter is not a forgery, a trick?" he exclaimed.

"Go get Congressman Norton—if you can—and get his denial," responded Langdon.

The junior Senator from Mississippi hurriedly pushed his way out of the Senate chamber. His day's work was done.

Down on a broad plantation along the Pearl River an old planter, who has borne his years well, as life goes nowadays, passes his days contentedly. He delights in the rompings of his grandchildren as they rouse the echoes of the mansion and prides himself on the achievements of their father, Randolph, who has improved the plantation to a point never reached before.

Sometimes he receives a letter from his daughter, Hope Georgia, now Mrs. Haines, telling him of her happy life, or perhaps it is a letter from Carolina, describing the good times she is having in London with the friends she is visiting.

And the old planter goes out on the broad veranda in the warm Southern twilight, and he thinks of the days that were. He remembers how the Third Mississippi won the day at Crawfordsville. He thinks of the days when he fought the good fight in Washington. His thoughts turn to the memory of her who went before these many years and whom he is soon to see again, and peace descends on the soul of the gentleman from Mississippi as the world drops to slumber around him.

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